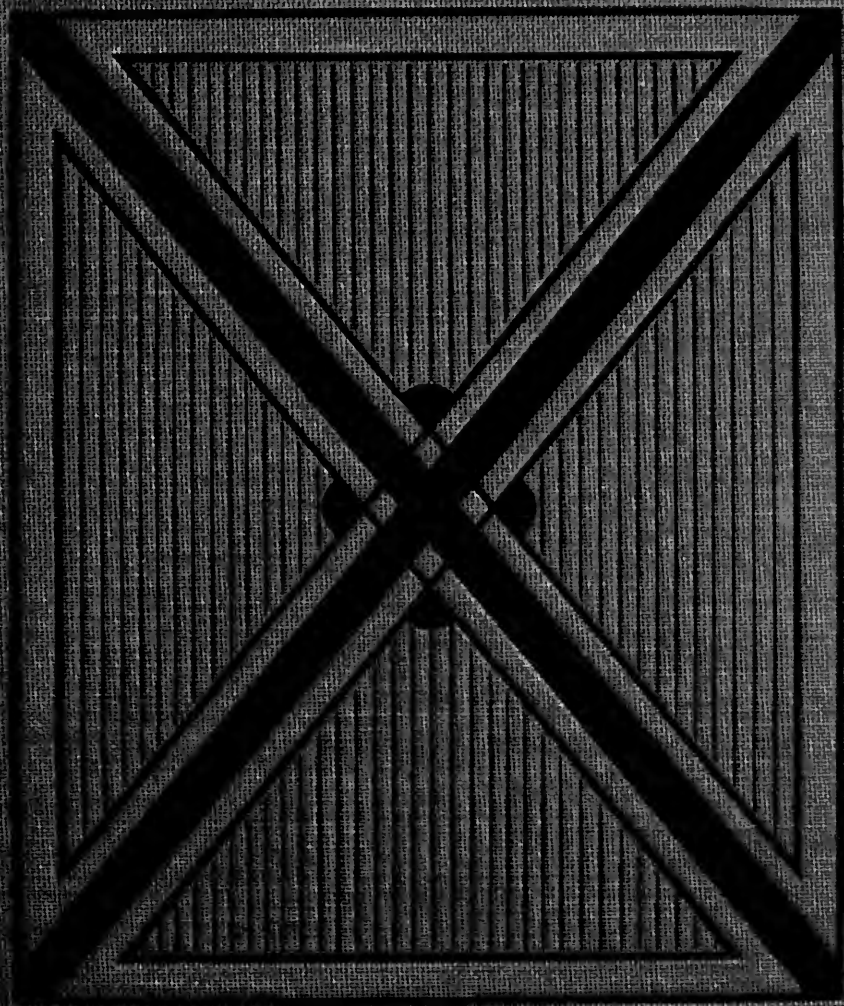


AS THE SPARKS
FLY UPWARD



CYRUS TOWNSEND BRAD



^f
W E Arnold 395

Mar 18/04

395





Copyright
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1911

Published October, 1911

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England

PS
1120
B72A88
1911

PREFACE

I MAY as well admit the obvious: I am a confirmed Prefaceteer, or, since I am coining a word, shall I say Prefateer?—one who writes prefaces. I think it can not be gainsaid that I am guilty of more prefaces — and books! — than any other living author. And the end is not yet! Having done something, I can not resist the temptation to talk about it—as the hen cackles when she lays an egg. Publishers, critics, possibly readers also, object to the preface; but most illogically, I think. They say nobody reads a preface nowadays. Granted for the sake of the argument! But if so, what harm can result from something that nobody reads? Well, it pleases me to be prefatory, so here goes.

This, gentle reader — book following, I mean, not preface present — is neither a sea story, nor an adventure tale, nor a romance of war, civil or uncivil. Although in the nature of things nearly every chapter bristles with strange, un-

PREFACE

usual, and exciting incidents, the main interest is not objectively in them but rather subjectively in the five persons about whom the action revolves. It is a problem novel, at least it so presents itself to me. And the problem, which is not solved, may be stated in the terms of an ancient aphorism perhaps more honored in the breach than in the observance:—“*What’s sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.*” Is it so, I wonder? The readers may decide that for themselves.

Of course the goose in this tale did not really—but I must restrain myself in some degree and not spoil the story by too premature a revelation. Suffice it to say that the gander thought so, and the question was therefore by no means an academic one for him.

I meant to put goose and gander on an absolute parity when I started out, but either my courage failed me or my affections would not permit. A poor author can not always do as he would with his characters, any more than a poor parent can with his children.

It has been charged against me that I have never presented a real thorough-going villain to

PREFACE

the world, except Sir Henry Morgan, Buccaneer. And the charge is true. I started to make Langford completely and persistently bad in "The Island of Regeneration," but he seized his chance to redeem himself, and of his own will became the most engaging character in the book. In the same way I cherished evil intentions toward the fair fame of Barmore in "The Better Man." He was designed for a worldly weakling, but, as before, his chance came in spite of poor me; he seized it, rose to heights which jeopardized the whilom superiority of Stebbing — and there you are!

Also I know I shall be faulted for the summary disposition of one of the characters in the book. But what else could I do with her? Alas, the mental crimes forced upon an elderly author of the vocation priestly by the stern necessities of the case! But I have warrant for my action. Shakespeare had to dispose of Mercutio in the middle of the play because he was too prone to occupy the centre of the stage to the exclusion of Romeo, to whom the place rightfully belonged. "Sweet Will," I thank thee for that example!

Therefore with but two further remarks I tear

PREFACE

myself away. Please do not identify mine with the opinions of any of my characters. I'm responsible for them all, remember! We may try as we can to look at the matter with the eyes of God; but the eye of our present vision is the eye of man, and those are very different eyes, indeed. My sense of justice says one thing, my weak humanity says another. And I can not say what others should have done under such circumstances; I can only point out what Captain Stephen Cleveland did.

Do you know, I did not think him very admirable at first; but as his career unfolded before me, I decided to award him the hero's palm after all. Does he deserve it in your opinion, dear reader? Farewell.

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY.

ST. GEORGE'S RECTORY,
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI,
September, 1911.

BOOK I
THE SPORT OF FORTUNE

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

CHAPTER I

GIVING ACCOUNT OF CAPTAIN STEPHEN CLEVELAND, MASTER MARINER AND GENTLEMAN,
AND JULIA, HIS FAIR YOUNG WIFE

THE Master of the *Swiftsure*, ignorant of the acute observations that wise Solon addressed to another potentate almost as supreme in his domain as a lord of the sea on his quarter-deck, counted himself a happy man, although he was yet young and very much alive. The two objects upon which his happiness rested, so he thought, as securely as the foundations of the deep are laid in the bars of the sea—as Sailor Jonah would phrase it—were both at this moment before his vision. These two *things*, if I may by that utterly insufficient yet greatly over-worked word describe entity and personality,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

were, proverbially at least, the most fickle, changeable, uncertain, inconstant, independent variables in creation! To avoid further speculation I disclose them in five words — a woman and a ship!

In none of the popular imaginations, or notions, concerning the nature of women and ships referred to above did the Master of the *Swiftsure* share. He was as confident of the absolute devotion and affection of Julia, his wife, as he was of the dependability of the great American tea clipper, his ship.

The *Swiftsure*, as the first half of her name implies, was built for speed. No vessel afloat boasted loftier spars, and over no other ship was more widely spread the snowy canvas, considering, of course, her length and beam and tonnage. And withal, as her skipper would have phrased it, "She was as safe and steady as a church" — not but that some churches are loose enough and uncertain on occasion, I find; but let the comparison stand. So the last half of her name is justified.

Everything about the vessel, that she might be sure as well as swift, was of the best, includ-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

ing the young captain and his younger wife. Even a landsman would have seen the necessity for absolute perfection of equipment, as well as exquisite proportion in adjustment and consummate ability in handling, for the Yankee clippers were driven as no ships before or after that sailed the Seven Seas.

On this very voyage home from Canton the *Swiftsure* (and it was her maiden cruise) had passed by British and other barks, staggering along with two reefs in their tops'ls, while she herself proudly sported to'gallant stun's'ls. Blow high, blow low, the Yankee skipper cracked on. It was his boast not to start a sheet or halyard after he struck the steady-going trades, so long as he could carry the wind, or, more accurately, so long as the wind would carry him on his course. If one of these bold seamen could round Cape Horn with everything set, aloft and alow, he counted himself a happy man.

I fear me I have let my love for the ship run away with me, a thing Captain Stephen Cleveland had no intention of allowing on this or any other cruise, and I turn away from this sea technicality—to the relief of the readers fem-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

inine and masculine in these piping days of the iron pot afloat—to that to which mere male humanity naturally turns with relief at almost any time, the woman.

A fair picture she made that spring afternoon (the bell forward had long since struck two, indicating that over an hour had passed of the first dog-watch), and a fine contrast she presented to her husband. In but one thing was there a resemblance between them. They were both splendidly tall, a thing unusual enough in the women of those days to be particularly mentioned, the sex apparently not having discovered in the fifties of the last century whatever Procrustean bed serves so gracefully to elongate them to-day. Captain Stephen Cleveland stood six feet and a trifle more in his shoes on his own quarter-deck, the woman's head coming a little above his shoulder, on which in sweeter moments it had often lain. Otherwise their contrarieties were openly apparent.

This undoubted oppositeness made them the more splendidly mated a pair. The tropic sun and the blustering winds of his many voyagings had but deepened and intensified the man's

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

darker skin and blacker hair; they seemed, if possible, to throw more light and color upon the glory of her locks and the beauty of her cheek. They say that blue eyes bespeak racial lordship and individual mastery, yet there was enough sparkling courage and splendid dominance in the blackness of Captain Stephen Cleveland's iris to give the lie, in his case at least, to the prevalent idea. Julia Cleveland's eyes were gray at most times, although on occasion they showed the limpid clearness and blue unfathomable deeps of the unfretted skies of a noonday in spring-time.

Her eyes were gray at that very moment, as she stood looking forward from white deck to taut rope, lofty spar, broad yardarm, and gleaming canvas. She balanced herself with no less ease than did her husband to the uneasy roll and pitch of the ship's tremendous drive under the pressure of the half-gale that was blowing. She had a woman's instinct for the beautiful, and a sailor's daughter's and a sailor's wife's appreciation of her only rival in grace and charm, a ship. Her eyes softened into a heavenly blueness when a sudden heel of the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

vessel inclined her gently against her husband and her looks sought his. Even his bolder, fiercer glance changed at the sweet and unexpected contact; tenderness filmed fire for a moment, but beneath that veil flashed passions warm, not to say white-hot, if of another fashion.

Life wedded had not yet exhausted its possibilities for these two. Its mysteries had not yet been solved. The usual and the inevitable had not brought into view the commonplace for these two present favored children of fortune, soon to become the wanton sport of wildest and most malign chance.

The bitter cynic or the worldly wise philosopher, viewing the happiness of the newly wedded pair on the *Swiftsure* (for her first cruise was also their first voyage), might have sneeringly observed that happiness founded upon a ship and eke a woman was by no means assured; the one the sport of the passionate seas, the other the plaything of the impulsive heart, both synonyms for inconstancy. But there was neither cynic nor philosopher aboard. Captain Stephen Cleveland might have laughed away

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

some of the arguments of these unpleasant personages, if they had been made to him, by pointing out that he was there to command the ship and—wait, O modern suffragette! In deference to you, I change the verb, and write—to love, if not command the woman.

Like my ship and her precious freightage, human and otherwise, a thousand leagues from point of departure, and five times that from haven of rest, how shall I come back to earth again? Facts preliminary, tedious perhaps, like eating and drinking and the prosaic but necessary functions of life, must skeletonize the body of romance before we can admire its outward beauty; as the fretted, worm-built coral rises slowly in the sea out of the depths to afford a bony foundation for fresh verdure and the nodding palm tree.

Captain Stephen Cleveland, like his clipper, the *Swiftsure*, was of Salem. His father and mother had been lost at sea. Their property, embarked in their own ship, had gone down with them. Little Stephen, left at home for a voyage or two for further schooling than could be given him on shipboard, had thus been bereft

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of all by one stroke of misfortune. Call of the deep rang imperative in his ears. At twelve he shipped as cabin boy; at nineteen he had his first command, a brig trading to the Caribbean; at twenty-six he was master and part owner of one of the finest of the tea clippers. This was a rapid but not an unusual career.

Like himself, Julia, born Pellew, was an orphan. Her father, ship-master too, had paid with his life the exacting toll of the rapacious ocean, while she was an infant in arms. A year before Julia's marriage her mother, from the quiet harbor of the old town, had slipped her cable, as a sailor would say, and gone out on the wide sea, the illimitable ocean which washes every shore, in a last cruise to join the husband whose memory she had followed with anxious and warm-hearted devotion for many years of widowhood. A long period of mourning hers had been, unrelieved save by the splendid promise of her glorious daughter. She was the more willing to go, in that before she took her last departure, she realized that Julia would be taken care of so long as Captain Stephen Cleveland could lift his arm or speak his word.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Neither Captain Stephen Cleveland nor Julia Pellew had ever loved any one but the other. They had known each other from childhood; but no period of long association had diminished surprise and delight in possession, for Captain Stephen Cleveland was at home infrequently, and for but few days. There had been no satiety born of familiarity in their intercourse. Their young hands still met with the clasp of unwonted use and daintier touch.

The compass needle sometimes varied; the North Star was not the only object of its pointing. Stephen Cleveland was far truer to the pole of his affections. Wheresoever he voyaged, whomsoever he met, whatsoever he did, there was for him but one face and figure, but one splendid form, of glorious womanhood. For her he shut his ears and closed his eyes to various siren calls. For her, Ulysses-like, he bound himself to the mast of hard work, sailing unharmed 'twixt Scylla and Charybdis. For her he labored early and late, until his twenty-sixth year found him, with deservedly high reputation in his profession and much honor among men and women, in command of the *Swiftsure*.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

On her part, Julia was not less constant and devoted to him than the far-voyaging lord of her young affection to her. She was too healthy and too happy to make a recluse of herself at home while he was away; and such, indeed, was not her lover's wish. In all the gayeties of her people and friends she bore a part, but it was a part of which the most jealous and exacting sweetheart would have approved. Thus they confronted each other at the end of each voyage, each with unblemished record, each with perfect trust, and each with growing passion. They thought of each other during their protracted separations with increasing longing, but with the absolute tranquillity of profound assurance of a devotion they equally shared, of the one to the other.

The death of Julia's mother, and her consequent lonely state, hastened their marriage day. The splendid result of the voyage that was completed after the good woman had gone to her rest, the reward of his success in the great new ship that was to be his own charge, made it easy for them to arrive at this decision. They were married on the deck of the *Swiftsure*, she con-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

senting to indulge his fancy, with friends aft and crew forward looking on approvingly. The very day of their wedding, after the wedding breakfast which had been served alike in cabin and fore-castle, and after the departure of the last boatload of cheerful guests, the tide serving, the anchor was weighed, and the ship, unmoored, started upon her voyage.

Never before, thought Captain Stephen Cleveland, had there been such a cruise. In that fond illusion, which she herself created, Julia Pellew, now Julia Cleveland, fully shared. Behind the curtains of their happiness, which even this rash intruding author would fain not draw, let them for the voyage remain undisturbed while youth and joy linger with them. They were young, they were alone, the wide sea was before them, the great ship was their own. Lacked they anything for happiness, the God of Good Fortune seemed ignorant of what it was, else he would have bestowed it upon them.

Their first port of destination was San Francisco. Gold colored the horizon of men's hopes there. The necessities of life, which sold for a song on the Eastern seaboard, brought small

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

fortunes on the Pacific shore. There were no railroads spanning the continent then. The westward course of empire prophesied by the good bishop had to take its way around Cape Horn, or across the Isthmus to Balboa's Sea if it was in a great hurry.

Captain Stephen Cleveland might have much enriched himself and his owners if he had carried passengers to California, but he had stipulated, when he was offered the command, that he and his wife should be alone on that voyage—one woman indeed was quite enough to fill the ship for him. Evidently the supercargo and the mates were wise enough to leave the young couple to themselves as much as possible.

Temptations to quick and easy fortunes irresistibly assailed the men of the *Swiftsure* so soon as she entered the well-named Golden Gate; and indeed, Captain Stephen Cleveland, laughing at the reversal of ordinary practice, invested an "adventure" part of the profits of the voyage, with a sailor friend, one Hampton Ellison of North Carolina (mark that name, dear reader), who having nothing but good health and invincible energy, wanted to go prospecting if some

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

one would furnish the wherewithal for half the profits that might accrue. Bread that, not cast upon the waters but upon the shore, and destined, even though upon the immutable element, to come back again after many days in strange ways, welcome and unwelcome, as the reader who perseveres shall see.

Most of the crew, weak to resist the possibility of sudden riches, deserted the ship and captain. The days were beginning to pass when the crew and officers in a Yankee ship made one family. The *Swiftsure* was a great ship, and required many men. Captain Stephen Cleveland was forced to fill out his complement with such as he could pick up. Decidedly a sorry lot, he thought, as he mustered them, yet he felt confident enough of controlling them. Fellows they were for the most part who had given up honest labor and were perhaps fugitives from justice,—the refuse, so called, of the frontier.

Clearing at last for the Orient, with a stop at Honolulu, he so timed his departure, he so drove his ship, that he arrived on the other side of the Pacific at the opportune moment when the first harvest of the tea crop was ready for shipping.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Captain Stephen Cleveland gathered the cream of it into his capacious hold, with other cases and packages of the light, perishable, yet attractive wares of China. Then, leaving more of his vagrom crew in the purlieus of Canton, whose places perforce were supplied by Asiatics and beachcombers, the *Swiftsure* got under way for the long run southward, the wild sweep about the stormy cape, and the great reach northward along the Atlantic shore of both Americas to home and the market. Great the reward and high the honor that awaited the first arrival.

Fortune still bestowed her favors with a lavish hand. Captain Stephen Cleveland was a student, a well educated man, a thorough gentleman—a merchant sailor of the past you say, incredulously, and therein I unhesitatingly agree—but I doubt if he had ever read or pondered upon the ancient and mystic phrase, “*Whom the gods destroy they first make mad.*” The intoxicating madness of joy and success sparkled in Captain Stephen Cleveland’s eyes, throbbed in his veins, bubbled in his heart; and in all this Julia, his young wife, shared.

They stood abaft the wheel that day. None

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

happened to be looking their way. Captain Stephen Cleveland, glancing forward, noted that fact. He looked critically over the side at the bright water rushing swiftly by; another second, and his eye ranged across the short wake in the boiling seas. The ship was making more than fifteen knots, he judged. In sheer happiness and satisfaction he thrust his arm around the trim waist of the woman by his side. He was not a demonstrative man, but then and there he kissed her on the cheek, deepening beauty's colors already flying there. He said as he did so:

“My dear,”—that was a simple appellation, but it meant a great deal from him whose word was usually “Julia,”—“if the wind holds and nothing happens, we shall be at home in less than twelve weeks from Canton—a record passage for me, and fortune for you!”

Oh, the potency that lies hid beneath that petty conjunction! If nothing happens, sun and light to-morrow. If nothing happens, we shall sleep sweet to-night. If nothing happens, success and happiness will attend our efforts. If—if!

Even as the wife, responsive to his caress,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

nestled a little closer and smiled more sweetly to him, there burst from the lips of a man forward a cry, the most terrifying that may be voiced or heard by human beings on the deck of a ship in the midst of the wide and lonely sea:

“ Fire! ”

CHAPTER II

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH HOW COMPLETE A CHANGE
A FEW HOURS MAY EFFECT IN
HUMAN FORTUNES

OF all the catastrophes that may menace man, the two most appalling are the burning of a ship at sea, and an earthquake upon the shore. In both instances the foundations of things are imperilled, and that upon which humanity ultimately depends is shaken. Indeed the disasters are much alike. So long as the ship floats, or the earth stands, the case is not wholly desperate; and even though the ship be wrecked and torn, her seams started, her hold full of water, yet, in case of a wooden vessel like the *Swiftsure*, she may still float and afford a wave-washed, tempest-tossed, chance of life; as the unshaken earth, whatever else may hap, remains a point of rest. But when the ship burns, unless the fire can be put out the helpless mariners are left without resource.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

What started the fire Captain Stephen Cleveland never knew. He could have developed it by investigation, could he have enjoyed the leisure to conduct it; but the most precious of commodities, time, was lacking. He might have fought it successfully if he had counted in his crew a normal number of men of courage and discipline, by which alone we are able to overcome the disabilities incident to shortness of time, or whatever catastrophe may be toward. A crew of Salem sailors of the olden time might possibly have made short work of that conflagration, but the Asiatics, Kanakas, Chinese, quite unleavened by the riffraff of degenerate Caucasians who were associated with them now, all played the coward's part. Almost before the pumps were rigged the foremast was ablaze; a falling yard miserably but effectually disposed of the two mates, Captain Stephen Cleveland's best men — death as usual choosing the shining mark. After that there was no stopping the swift devouring fire, or the wildly terrified men.

I could describe in detail this conflagration, the rapid consumption of the great ship. I have been a sailor, and on the ocean have I fought

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

fire, and that successfully, or I should not be telling this veracious tale. But I have matters of greater moment than burning ships before me, and in a world which has forgotten the very names of the masts and ropes and spars of the glorious "wind-jammers" of the past, the description would be mainly unintelligible to the reader, and therefore, time wasted. Besides, this is not a sea story, and I must get on.

By nightfall the ship was a flaming volcano. The loss of the mates, and the mutinous conduct of the wretched crew, had destroyed any chance of escape. The wind, enkindled to ambition perhaps by the sight of the leaping flame, had risen rapidly until it was blowing a mad gale, sweeping down from the Line — the Equator, O ye landsmen! — over three hundred leagues of open ocean without a thing to break its onrush, save some wildly tossing ship. After the foremast went, with the stays forward burned away, the gale soon disposed of those abaft the lost spar; main and mizzen presently carried away, and booms and yards and bellying sails were hurled to leeward in one great, gray, fire-touched cloud, seen mistily for a moment against

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the black sky. The ship was thus left helpless. The captain with his own hands at the wheel had somehow managed to keep the *Swiftsure* before the wind, to blow the flames forward and leave aft as much of haven, and for as long a time, as might be.

Death, as if repentant of the ruthlessness of his first onfall, had distributed his subsequent favors impartially. He began, by the way, with a drunken sailor in the fore hold with an overturned lamp (concealed fact which the author, more omniscient than a mere sea captain, discloses to the reader as the origin of the conflagration); and he ended by considerably thinning out the crew in various ways during the course of the battle. In his efforts to drive the cowards to work, and to maintain discipline, Captain Stephen Cleveland had dealt out death himself to one or two, but with such little effect on the terrified mass of panic-struck, craven wretches, that he soon desisted from the effort.

Behold this shipmaster now, half naked, his clothes burning from his back, his skin smoked black, soot-covered, flame-scorched, showing blistered through smouldering rents and tears,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

his hands bleeding, the hair burned from his head, his lips cracked and broken, his eyeballs seared, holding the helm indomitable—a master of men, indeed!

On either side of Captain Stephen Cleveland an eager mass of wildly excited, frightened curs, yellow-faced mainly and yellow-streaked in the heart, too, are struggling around the two quarter-boats, to starboard and port respectively—the boom-boats amidships having long since burned with the rest of the ship. In despair Captain Cleveland had at last left them to their own devices. Sink him, save him, he would at least, for their sakes and for his own, keep true his helm!

Back of these groups, where the whaleboat swung across the stern, the old boatswain—only true man, apparently, to back the captain—kept guard, belaying-pin in hand, one or two rash, intruding wretches reeling back before him having felt the force and power of his mighty arm. By this hardy sailor's side—undaunted, like her husband and not less heroic she—still stood Julia Cleveland. Seeing how things were going, realizing the inevitable, Captain Stephen

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Cleveland had placed her in the veteran boatswain's care.

So soon as it became evident that the fire could not possibly be controlled, Julia had gone below to her cabin and gathered a few poor necessities in a little bag, in obedience to her husband's hurried directions. She had done more, of her own motion: she had filled the lockers of the whaleboat with provision from the cabin stores, her movements luckily being unnoticed by the men, in their excitement. Now by the side of the boatswain and a few of the best men remaining faithful, she waited for she scarce knew what, unless it were the pleasure of her lord.

In wild confusion the surviving cowards piled into the two quarter-boats. With unskilfulness begot of fear, the falls were overhauled somehow, and the boats lowered away. The sea was running madly. To launch the cutters under such conditions were tasks difficult enough for cool head and skilful hand; in both cases the present attempt resulted in quick disaster. A great sea caught the one to starboard, drove it with hammer-like force under the counter, and smashed it to kindling wood on the instant. The

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

wave for the moment was crested with white faces, staring agonizedly as the ship swept on.

The boat to port swung clear and lay for a moment water-borne in the trough of the sea; but oars could not be broken out before she broached-to and capsized. The watchers aft caught a glimpse of two men clinging to the yielding twisting keel, their pallid cheeks gleaming in the wet in the radiance of the flame, ere darkness fell upon them. That tragedy was over almost before it had begun.

Captain Stephen Cleveland, noting it all with a kind of pitying contempt for these poor unfortunates, shouted a hoarse order to the boatswain. The men with him, somewhat sobered by the reckless handling of the other boats and by the dire consequences to their shipmates of the haste and confusion in their launchings, stepped rapidly into the whaleboat by the boatswain's orders. She was provided with air-tight compartments forward and aft, a new device then; and while they held, she was unsinkable. The oars were then slipped in the rowlocks, and last of all, the boatswain took his place in the stern sheets. He clasped the steering oar and mo-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

tioned the captain's wife to follow. She positively refused to do so.

A low growl of anxious entreaty broke from the lips of the nervous men on the thwarts, a hand forward fumbled at the falls, the boatswain rose, oar in hand, and it was astonishing how he maintained his foot-hold on the boat swinging at the davits.

"Keep fast that fall till I give the word," he roared to the man forward, poising the oar menacingly in his hand as he spoke, "or, by God, I'll brain ye where ye sit, ye damned cowards. Ye saw what happened to the other fools; your life depends on obeyin' orders." His voice rose so that it could be heard above the roaring of the flames and the rush of the wind. "Come aboard, ma'am," he said to Julia Cleveland.

"I won't leave my husband," answered the woman, stubbornly.

"He'll be comin' presently," explained the boatswain, hurriedly. "He'll bring the ship to the wind, so 's to give us a lee to launch this boat in. We couldn't do it in this follerin' sea. See, our painter's fast to the mizzen chains. We'll swing alongside for a moment an' --"

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“For God’s sake, go, Julia!” cried Captain Stephen Cleveland.

At this juncture he had looked aft for a second and had instantly divined what was taking place. The flames were roaring at his feet, the heat had become unbearable, the wind had kept them forward of the wheel, but between decks they had full sway, and in the long battle they were the conquerers.

“Not without you, Stephen,” answered his wife resolutely—her first disobedience.

“I can’t hold this wheel longer, you must go,” he roared back in reply.

Julia Cleveland still determined, started toward him, but now the boatswain suddenly caught her around the waist, and in spite of her struggles, lifted her into the boat as if she had been a child. He set her down in the stern sheets and placed his knee against her to hold her there.

“Right-O!” he cried.

Captain Stephen Cleveland nodded approvingly. He put the helm over rapidly, he jammed it down hard, and all that was left of the *Swiftsure* slowly ran up into the wind. The captain held her there with flames wreathing the spoke

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

ends. Hands at the falls lowered the boat away; the oars were out-thrust as she descended; standing by, the men bent aft, and with outstretched blades were ready for the water's touch. In an instant the small boat was afloat.

"Give way! Strong!" roared the boatswain.

The water caught the shallop and heaved her up toward the burning hulk of the ship, low in the water now. The old seaman's handling of the boat was magnificent. There was a comforting quiet for a few seconds under the lee of the clipper. The boatswain stared anxiously toward the quarter-deck, now flame-crowned, waiting for the master. The painter, the long line which attached the small boat to the ship, tightened as she rolled to a sudden sea. At that instant Captain Stephen Cleveland appeared at the rail not fifteen feet away, and the relieved boatswain swung the whaleboat toward the ship.

The brave shipmaster had held the burning wheel until it dropped to pieces beneath his blistering hands. His face was black and bloody; a monster, a demon, could not have looked more terrible. Slowly and painfully, for he was frightfully burned, he thrust one leg over the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

rail; as he did so, he reached for the painter, which was made fast to what was left of the after swifter of the mizzen rigging. He intended to grasp it, to let himself down into the water by it, to be hauled aboard and then to cut it and go free.

Fate, however, had not yet done her worst for this pair who had been so happy. A gust of wind carried a burning brand of some kind in front of the captain's face; he instinctively shrank back a moment; in some way the fire lodged upon the rope. Another roll of the ship, another surge of the small boat, and the connecting link, flame-weakened, was severed. While Captain Stephen Cleveland stood staring, the whaleboat was whirled away into the surrounding blackness. A woman's scream came faintly up against the wind, and died away. He had a glimpse of a white face, and it too was gone.

Captain Stephen Cleveland clapped his hands to his face and then even his inflexible will gave way. He fell backward, apparently into a seething mass of flame. Ere he completely lost consciousness he felt himself crash through the red-hot planking. He was conscious of burning

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

arms reaching out to clasp him. The pain might have been excruciating, he did not think of it then, for all his consciousness was merged in the remembrance of one white face, the reverberation of one wild cry in the night, heard across the awful sea. And then Captain Stephen Cleveland mercifully knew no more.

A few short hours since, he had reckoned himself the happiest of men; now he lies alone in the hold of his great ship, burning fiercely above his head, with no human hand to control her, driven madly by the wind and tossed by the surges of the great sea. The ocean had been the scene of his triumphs: there he had fought and there he had conquered; and now like a Viking of old he was embarked for Valhalla and eternity, amid the flames of his own ship.

Farther away, indifferent now to the burning ship, a few men, nerved to desperation by the perils with which they found themselves environed, and inspired almost to the sublime by the heroic courage and splendid seamanship of the old boatswain, battled to keep head to the sea a tiny vessel whose thin wooden planks did not seem calculated to withstand the tremendous

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

strain to which they were exposed. From the stern of the little boat a woman, dead apparently, but for the rapid heaving of her bosom and the painful fixity and concentration of her gaze, stared at a diminishing spark of light, now rising into vision upon the crest of a wave, now sinking into darkness in the hollow of the sea.

“Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”

CHAPTER III

DISCLOSES MAN, PROUD MAN, FIGHTING DESPERATELY FOR LIFE, WHICH HE THOUGHT HELD NOTHING FOR HIM

NO, gentle reader, as you have doubtless surmised, Captain Stephen Cleveland did not die; neither, I will admit without hesitation, did Julia his wife. They both survived their environment of peril, although it was a long time until they met again, and much happened *ad interim*. This is, of course, inevitable, else there had been no story to tell about them.

What doth it profit a man to go into exact details as to how Captain Stephen Cleveland, whom we saw so suddenly precipitated like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, into a burning fiery furnace, managed to escape instant death? For one thing, he fainted as he fell; for another he pitched through weakened burning planking down to the very bowels of the ship, which the flames had not yet touched, and there

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

he lay oblivious, until the heavens opened and the rain descended and beat upon that ship, until the fall became a flood.

The rain came just in time to put out the fire. Indeed, except away aft, where some few elements of form and shape still remained, the *Swiftsure* had already been burned to the water's edge. She had even been gutted of her cargo, and the fire aft must have soon expended itself for lack of that on which to feed. True it is, that in its final efforts it would undoubtedly have done away with Captain Stephen Cleveland; for the rain, as has been noted, came in the very nick of time.

The rain which put out one fire revived another fire in another sense; that is, it restored our hero. Is Captain Stephen Cleveland hereafter to be a hero or not, I wonder?

In this limited life, with its inadequate appreciation of the future, it is not given us to know whether there will be pain or joy in the resurrection. I think it must be painful for humanity to slough off this mortal coil, even though it thereafter rise into immortal being. For this victim of fire and flood the awakening was in-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

deed a resurrection; for with all the consciousness that remained with him as he fell, Stephen Cleveland had been convinced that instant death was his only portion.

He was naturally dazed when he did awake, and only the quick and painful remembrance of that wild cry in the night, that white face in the darkness, convinced him finally that wherever he might now be, he was not in paradise. I suppose he was too shocked, bruised, and burned to recall that fact during the first moment in the surpassing physical pain he suffered, but soon enough that bitter recollection added its poignant touch to all his other miseries.

Imagine, if you will, a body scorched, blistered, burned, bruised by a hard fall, every tender spot throbbing with anguish as the man was helplessly rolled about in the bottom of the ship. Imagine, if you can, a doom sentence delivered, the penalty inflicted, a heart broken, a tie severed, a hope lost, an eternal desire unsatisfied, a life — two lives — blasted. These are the states material and spiritual of Captain Stephen Cleveland.

The sailors have an old rhyme that runs this way:

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“With the wind before the rain,
Hoist your tops’ls up again;
With the rain before the wind,
Your tops’l halyards you must mind.”

And the sign did not fail in this instance, for the deluge of rain was succeeded by a tornado in which the wave-washed hulk became the toy and sport of the angry seas. Now it was lifted to heaven, now it was sunk into the black void of some watery hell. Now it swung vertiginously on the periphery of some vast vortex, into which by and by it would be sucked down irresistibly only to be vomited forth on the mighty crest of some saline eruption. It was as unimportant and inconsequential as a chip in a rapid, save that the chip goes one way under such circumstances, but the hulk went every way.

Captain Stephen Cleveland expected the wreck to break up under him at any moment. It was scarcely conceivable that any fabric, however stoutly constructed, could withstand such a tremendous shaking. But the makers of that vessel had builded better than they knew; however much of mad buffeting this “tennis ball of fortune” received, it still floated. The instinct of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

life — instinct surely, since reason told him that he had no longer any interest for which to live — made Captain Stephen Cleveland fight on with the ship.

To get or to maintain a footing was impossible. He crawled to that portion of the hulk which stood highest above the waves and clung there, finding convenient iron-work fast to naked ribs for handhold. Thereafter he was hurled backward, or thrown forward, or flung sideways like the cracker of a whip-lash. His arms were almost pulled from their sockets. Again and again breaking seas overwhelmed him, wreathing long arms about him as if they would fain tear him from his holding. The maw of the monster was opened before him to swallow him up; but Captain Stephen Cleveland would not be denied, he held on.

It often happens that when man can do no more, he can still hold on; and in the battle between sea and wreck and man, the man at last won. I will not say that calm supervened, but toward morning the fury of the tempest spent itself. The waves still rolled in watery Alps, but they were smoothing into foothills of sea rapidly.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

The crazy hulk became quieter, comparatively speaking. The stern being the highest portion of the wreck, the wind swung it about and drove before the gale the remains of the ship. Backward like a crab, and at the crab's rate, it progressed languidly. And Captain Stephen Cleveland, utterly worn out, presently fell into the heavy sleep of complete exhaustion; glad, if he could have voiced his thoughts, for the merciful oblivion.

Behold him there, naked, black from smoke or bruises where he was not red or bleeding, the only living object, lying helpless, unconscious, in the bones, the gaunt skeleton of the once great ship, the fierce tropic sun by and by beating down upon him, as he lay rolling, wallowing, in stupor on the charred and jagged planks.

Man, proud man! And what is he, O Lord, that Thou art mindful of him?

It was late afternoon when Captain Stephen Cleveland awoke to intolerable thirst, to excruciating pain breaking forth in every stiffened wound, in every red-hot blister; awoke to take stock of the circumstances and to begin the battle for life again.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Alas! he who had been master, was now worse than slave. He was helpless: what the fire had spared, the sea had torn away; there was no food, no water, no tool, no weapon, no shelter. A naked man, a sick man, a tortured man, a thin shell of straining, half-burned wood between him and watery voids miles deep — such was his physical condition. What was his mental state?

In one short day everything he owned in the world had gone. Naked, indeed, in that hour, and defenceless before his unseen yet malevolent adversary! His wife, his young, bright wife, whom he loved as the light of heaven, torn from him, and doubtless her body now floating beneath him in the oozy depths of this same cruel sea.

It did not seem possible, if her experience of weather had been like his, that the whaleboat could have survived the seas; and he had no reason to expect or hope that the furious tempest had broken upon him alone.

What had he now to live for? Destitute, bereft, O God! — was there a God in that bright blue heaven?

Captain Stephen Cleveland's faith wavered, yet from his parched lips broke incoherent

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

sounds of prayer; and because he was a man and not a thing, because he was compounded of weak flesh, blood, and bone, and not of oak and iron, seasoned oak or tempered steel, he fought on.

The cool waters swept across the hulk at his feet tempting him; it was useless fighting longer; a suicide's plunge, laving the heat and fever of body and soul in the cool green depths, and all would be over. He would not take it. He would starve, he would burn with thirst, he would drift on and on until he died, if death must be his portion. But death must come and take him. He would not give up. No single step of his own would he take to meet death. God had given him life; and while the feeblest pulsation of it throbbed in his heart, he would retain it. It was for God to take it again if He willed—not for him.

Man, proud man! Yea, indeed proud, and rightfully so.

Why prolong the agony of description? Why go into long details of interminable days beneath that burning sky, upon that drifting mass of charred, blackened, slowly disintegrating timber? Why dwell upon the ghastly craving of his

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

hunger, the awful gnawing pangs of fevered thirst that racked and tore him? Why chronicle the ravings of a mind diseased, of a heart broken, of a hope crushed?

Did Captain Stephen Cleveland pray? Yea, verily. Did Captain Stephen curse? Aye, that too. But he did not, could not, die, and so he drifted on and on and on. For how many hours, through how many days of blazing sun, for how many nights peopled with black and gloomy terrors, no one shall say.

By and by, what was left of the *Swiftsure* came suddenly to a rest. A heavier sea in the gray of an early morning lifted it up and flung it down upon a barrier reef over which the white waves broke with force tremendous. There the wreck hung, fast breaking up. The resistless batterings of massive seas upon her planking, the shock of her striking, the sudden cessation of mad motion (the tossing at first had made him, a veteran of many cruises, deadly seasick, while he had strength enough for it) finally awakened Captain Stephen Cleveland from a stupor that should have been his last, to a realization of what had happened.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Opening his eyes, he saw before him a palm tree!

Many a time had mocking visions of sea and shore, of home and his wife, displayed themselves before him in those awful hours. Was this a final effort of cruel fate to sport with him before he died? — he wondered. He stared at it, unbelieving, concentrating all his dying faculties and fast vanishing consciousness upon it.

The tree wavered, it swayed before his vision, but in the end it stood fixed. He closed his eyes and opened them, still it remained. Could it be possible that the ship, or what was left of her, was at rest? And upon what desert lonely shore?

The stern had been uplifted in the air when she struck. He heard the thundering of mighty rollers coming straight down from the Line crashing against the sides, biting at them, tearing off piece after piece. Was that land he surveyed from his crumbling throne? He was most curious about it, in a strange sort of detached way. Was anybody there? Would Julia Cleveland greet him on that dazzling mass of whiteness, which by and by he divined to be a shining strand rising out of the heavenly waters of a quiet lagoon,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

matched in color only by the azure of the swelling sky?

He must look into this matter. He must investigate it more closely. He was past walking, but he could crawl. The hulk slanted downward; he got to his hands and knees. Painfully, the moments seeming hours, he made his way to the fore part of the ship. His progress was more like falling than creeping. At last reaching the bows, he lifted his head animal-like and peered landward. Yes, it was an island with tree-clad hills. Suddenly a wave larger than the rest tore from its fastenings the charred plank to which he clung. He was in the water. Instinctively realizing what it meant, his grasp upon it tightened; it was his last effort. To let go now would be to lose everything; to hold on meant life and salvation. Again he held on.

The mounting wave rolled him across the shallow lagoon. Hard by there was an opening in the barrier. The tide was flowing in — the great, deep, slow-moving, tremendous tide, the irresistible tide of the Pacific, bore him shoreward, toward the shining strand.

He could not have made a stroke now with

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

arm or leg for his life's sake, but he could hold on a little longer. By and by his dragging feet touched the bottom. The water shallowed, he abandoned his plank, and on his hands and knees again, he crawled out and fell prostrate on the sand, his lips to the earth he had never so loved before.

He could not lie there long. A little distance away fresh water ran. Slowly, painfully, he crawled to the brook. A weaker man would have drunk until he died; not so with Captain Stephen Cleveland. With iron constraint he took even less than the circumstances warranted.

Oh, how sweet, how heavenly, was the taste of water that was fresh and life-giving, after a week of the salt and loathsome sea, once so loved!

He was terribly hungry still, but he forgot it for the moment. The water of life flowed before him; as of old, it was free. There was no one to bid him stay. He sipped again and again. Greatly refreshed and fearful of taking more, he crawled farther inland. Beneath the palm he found a broken cocoanut. Fortunately for him the hard shell had been riven in its fall, else it might have been locked in armor

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of proof, for all he could use it. He ate slowly, fighting ravenous desires. The sun came out and enveloped him, as he lay on the shore.

Food, drink, warmth, rest!

Captain Stephen Cleveland fell asleep upon his island, the eye of God watching over him. And any other eye? Who knows!

BOOK II
THE ISLAND OF INNOCENCE

CHAPTER IV

WHICH SHOWS HOW THE POOR FORLORN CAST-
AWAY WAS WATCHED IN THE NIGHT

THE moment he awakened, Captain Stephen Cleveland saw that it was very late in the afternoon. It is impossible to conceive the exquisite sense of refreshment that had come to his poor torn body and his poor tired soul from the long quiet hours of sleep he had spent lying upon the warm and yielding sand under the spreading palm.

His thirst was still overpowering, his hunger frantic, but he had at hand the wherewithal to satisfy both. Indeed, his first task was to crawl to the brook and drink, this time with more assurance and with more satisfactory results.

Captain Stephen Cleveland was at home in the tropics. He had made a study of the natural products thereof. He could distinguish between fruits pleasant to the eye, sweet to the taste, but

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

bad for the body, and those which were nourishing and health-giving.

Indeed, strangely enough, lying by his side he found scattered some of the food products to be found south of the Line: bananas, a pineapple, another cocoanut, and other fruits he was too worn out to recall just then. How these things got there he could not conjecture; indeed, he made no attempt to speculate upon the mystery, if such it was, having other things to think of and naturally not being mentally very acute under the circumstances. He ate and drank again, unreasoning and contented.

There come periods when to eat and drink are almost the only desires. Later, when the physical man should be satisfied, the spiritual man would make those demands upon him which no food that he could come at upon any deserted island in the South Pacific seas, or anywhere else, would ever be able to satisfy.

Was this island deserted? He could not tell. At all events nothing had troubled him so far. Were there savage cannibals making their home upon it? He had no means of ascertaining. Were there fierce beasts prowling through its

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

wooded dells? He had no assurance of that, but his knowledge of the Pacific did not predispose him to anticipate such a peril. At any rate, before the possible onslaught of the one or the other he would be alike helpless. He was philosopher enough not to worry overmuch about possible dangers which he could not avert, and other and more poignant miseries engrossed him.

Although he was greatly refreshed by rest and food and drink, not in a day or in many days would these repair the ravages wrought by the awful experiences through which he had passed, the terrific demands that had been made upon him. And the building-up process, with nothing but the pineapple, the cocoanut, or other purely vegetable diet — upon which he would be forced to subsist hereafter for many days, perhaps for life — would be slow until he became accustomed to it. What of that? Time, which had been so priceless before, was now as valueless as though it had been hoarded heaps of gold and silver.

Flashes of bitterness tinged the complexion of his thoughts. He had crawled heretofore between brook and tree; now he arose to his feet and walked unsteadily. It was his first sign of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

returning manhood. He stared seaward first of all. It had been calm for days, comparatively speaking that is, the breeze had been low and steady, but upon the horizon now there was portent of coming storm.

The scorched, ghastly, blackened bones of the ship lay upon the barrier yet. Should the wind rise in the night, what was left of her now would be beaten to ultimate pieces by morning—the final end of the great clipper! And he was sick of her, he loathed the sight of her. He forgot the long days of joy and peace in the short period of horror that had supervened.

He abhorred the sight of the blue sea also. Each white-capped wave mocked him. He had been its master ten days before; now he was its prisoner. As it had kept ward over the lonely and desolate island from the beginning of time, so it would keep ward over him it had hurled upon it, to hold him there, it might be forever. He shuddered as he looked at its bright expanse. For all it loomed so lovely, for all it showed so fair, beneath its shining surface lay his wife beautiful. He had no hope otherwise. Suddenly he cursed it madly, his voice rising in imprecation in the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

silence until it frightened him and he became as suddenly quiet again.

The night fell with tropic unexpectedness. Where should he pass it? He had no choice, there was nowhere to go, there was nothing to do, there were no precautions to take. He was very tired and sleepy. Up under the palm tree to the low, somewhat sheltered nook in the sands, he dragged himself.

He knelt down. He had not knelt for a long time, words did not come to him then, petitions did not frame themselves.

“God! God!” he murmured at last, and then he fell asleep.

How sound was that slumber, thought the silent watcher, noiselessly creeping to his side, standing poised upon slender feet with hands outstretched backward, on tiptoe to flee from this strange mystery at the faintest indication of an awakening.

In that sleep what dreams were those of Captain Stephen Cleveland? How luridly before his vision flamed his ship! How piercing within his ear the appeal of his wife sounded from that black darkness! He started, he moved uneasily,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

he threw himself suddenly to one side, as if to free himself from such bitter recollections.

Light, noiseless as the mist of a summer morning, the watcher fled soundlessly away and left the sleeper alone. No fierce, bloodthirsty savage was there, no wild beast ravening for blood, no subtle serpent poisoning to strike had watched him as he slept. What, then? Who, then?

It was broad day when he awoke, more master of himself with every hour. Instincts of cleanliness came to him. In the midst of the greatest deprivations which life could bring, he thought how much he craved a piece of soap! He plunged into the life-giving water of the brook; he would try the salt seas when he felt stronger and more inclined that way.

He freshened himself and cleansed himself as well as possible. He would find something after a while to facilitate that process perhaps, but for the present he had to be content with the water alone.

He did not find it difficult to get something to eat. Fruit, as before, was piled near his sleeping place, and this time he marvelled at it. How had it come there? — surely not without human

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

agency. It had not been there when he went to sleep, according to his recollection. Some one must have brought it. Who could it have been?

He was yet feeble. He stared landward into the thick trees with a sensation of terror; yet of what had he to be afraid? There were no tortures that he had not undergone, no deaths that he had not died. There was nothing for him to live for now, nothing for him to hope for on that island, which ships might never visit. Naked as when he came from his mother's womb and almost as helpless, he might have said, as was said of old, "*I can of mine own self do nothing.*"

Whoever or whatever had brought the things to eat there, was evidently beneficent and kindly in intention. But he could not settle the matter just then; later he would recur to it with growing interest.

Resigned, and thankful therefor, he made his meal. The wind had risen in the night, but he had slept on. With the disappearance of the watcher the rainless storm had broken over his head, but he had slept on. After the storm a calm had come; and through this, too, he had slept on.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

He sat himself moodily down upon the sand facing the sea. The ship had disappeared. The long waves broke upon the barrier, and there was nothing there but the reef and rock to stop their progress, save where they raced through the opening and fell crashing upon the beach. Physically he felt much better, in other ways not so well. He began to remember, he went through it all again. In his fancy the cup of happiness was once more lifted to his lips, but to be dashed down. He saw things in their right relations, their true proportions, and in the seeing he was most miserable.

It was not the ship, it was not the property embarked in it, not the lost men, over whom he repined, bitterly and sorrowfully as he regretted them all — it was his wife, the woman sweet and splendid to whom he had given his heart, who had been his ideal all the years of his life, since he began as a boy to love her. What had they, either of them, done, that they should thus be parted? Why had he fought for life without her? What did it hold for him now? He buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud. Why

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

not? There was nobody there to see, or hear, or care.

Would he vegetate upon that island until he became a degraded brute, feeding and performing the functions of life, without a soul? Why had he battled so to preserve that life? He looked upon himself, his wounds already beginning to heal in the fresh pure air, youth and strength his dower, good health and clean living his habit. He wondered why he had cared to make the struggle to keep alive. A thousand times during that mad wrestle upon the hulk with death and the deep, he had only to let go; but he had held on. Even then something stirred within him, indomitable. He shut his teeth together and rose to his feet. Perhaps life held some task for him after all. Surely not even upon the loneliest island would he fail to find some duty owed to God, if not to man.

He found upon the edge of the wood broken pieces of cane; from them he selected one to serve as a staff. As he was naked, he gathered foliage, broad leaves, and twisted them about his waist. From another leaf he fashioned himself a cover-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

ing for his head. He could not yet endure without discomfort, and perhaps danger, the fierce rays of that tropic sun. Thus ready, he started to survey his domain.

The barrier reef around it was undoubtedly a coral reef, but the island was the volcanic product of some long past cataclysm which had brought it from the deep to the surface. He readily settled the points of the compass by the sun. To the northward steep cliffs several hundred feet high overhung the lagoon; to the southward the ground sloped gently upward from the curving beach to low hills. He plodded along the beach for some miles, until it bent away eastward and northward, and he had reached its narrower end. He was not equal to exploring it farther although he judged it to be two or three miles across in its widest part, and possibly ten or more long. It was well watered, apparently abounding in all the natural products to be met with south of the Line. Here and there were open glades varied with stretches of woodland. The vegetation was luxuriant and beautiful.

The breezes blew softly over him; birds of rare and gorgeous plumage disported themselves

'AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

before him; flowers of striking shape, magnificently hued, appeared on every hand. The wind was laden with spicery and balm. It was a little paradise of the Pacific, yet so lonely! He had no idea, plodding painfully and drearily along the shore, that his every movement was being watched. Eagerly, intensely, curiosity commingled with fear, wistful boldness with timorous desire, observed him.

So the long day dragged on. At eventide he came back to the friendly shelter of the palm tree. Once again the night fell, once again he slept and dreamed, once again there crept near to him the figure, as before, and bent over him. Something moved him; he stirred suddenly, his arm flung about, and ere she could escape, his fingers closed tenaciously about the ankle of a woman.

CHAPTER V

WHEREIN THE EXCITED PURSUER DISCOVERS THE
ELUSIVE SPIRIT OF THE ISLAND

A WOMAN! Had Adam found his Eve in that paradise of the Pacific? And would a serpent follow after, in accordance with the time-honored legend?

Surprising and most unexpected, this contact with a human being awakened Captain Stephen Cleveland into instant life; a thrill of companionship, the leaping consciousness of fellowship with his kind, shot through him. The limb he clasped was warm and very much alive, for it struggled violently in his grasp. He had lain on his back, and without quite realizing what was toward, he tried to sit up; as he did so, the being he had seized, struggling desperately but without a sound, as he without a word, managed to effect a release, and broke suddenly away.

There was no moon; the night was softly black, as in the tropics. Beneath the tree where he lay,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

no radiance from the thick star-sown sky penetrated. He was conscious of a dim, blurred figure before his eyes in that darkness. He heard a faint rustling among the leaves, as she darted away. That was all. Pursuit was useless then.

Captan Stephen Cleveland sat up and rubbed his eyes—prosaic aftermath of romance that!—and wondered if it was a dream. He had had so many dreams of late, and in all of them a woman, his wife. This was not she, beyond peradventure. Indeed, while the reader knows it by favor of the gracious author, Captain Stephen Cleveland himself was by no means absolutely sure that his midnight visitor was a woman at all. He thought so, the slenderness of the ankle indicated the sex of its owner, the strength with which it had been torn away, even that desperate struggle in the dark, seemed to predicate a woman full grown. Still, both conditions might have been fulfilled by a young boy. Did Captain Stephen Cleveland hope not, I wonder?

Ah, well, his brief experience in that handhold was not enough to enable him to pronounce definitely upon the question of sex, and he was too bewildered to care very much, perhaps. Of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

but one thing was he sure, his hands had touched a human being, he was not alone upon the island; and for that he could not but be supremely glad.

Imagine, if you can, dear reader, in the bosom of your family, dwelling perchance in the beehive of a towering city apartment house, with thousands of other families close at hand—too close it may be—what it meant to Captain Stephen Cleveland to realize that he had some kind of a human companion upon that island.

Captain Stephen Cleveland had not thought that he could ever again develop such interest in any human being as suddenly filled him then. After a time he arose and went out from the shade of the trees and stood erect in the starlight and peered about him. It was, he judged from the look of the sky, about two in the morning. In an hour or so day would break; thereafter he would with the first blush of the morning light begin a search for his fellow cast-away, for as such he instinctively designated the other.

He could sleep no more. With what anxiety he waited until the sun rose can scarce be told. For the moment his thoughts were no longer con-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

ined to one woman; for a little while Julia Cleveland ceased to hold the only place. Yet in his longing for human kind, for human touch, for human speech, he bitterly repined at the thought that came to him presently, that whomsoever he might find, it would not be she.

At last to the eager watcher came the lagging day. No day that he had heretofore spent upon the island was such as that one was to be.

Captain Stephen Cleveland was a methodical man, and he intended thoroughly to search the island, which was long and narrow in its configuration. He would start from the low southern end like a hunter beating a covert, and survey the length and breadth of it, driving, as he hoped, the quarry before him.

Before he began his search, however, he went back to the place where the incident had occurred and carefully scrutinized the yielding sand. That his adventure had been no dream but real, he was now assured; for there before his eyes, clearly defined, cleanly marked in the sand, was a human footprint.

Crusoe was not more surprised at a similar revelation than Captain Stephen Cleveland at

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

that sign. Crusoe's heart was filled with apprehension at the Man Friday's marks upon the shore; satisfaction and curiosity were the emotions of this later Selkirk. One thing he noted — no boy on earth ever boasted the long, narrow, slender, perfectly shaped foot that had made the betraying print in the sand. His nocturnal visitor was a woman. Was there pleasure or the reverse, in this knowledge now in Captain Stephen Cleveland's mind, I wonder?

Scattered on the sand, dropped in confusion rather than in the dainty order he had marked before, were the fruits her hand had gathered, votive offering to the strange god cast up by the sea on her hitherto undisputed shore. There was a pitiful sort of appeal in the friendly gift, which touched him now he knew whence it had come. He was resolved, naturally enough, to find her. He had, as it were, once more a purpose in life; it might develop into a duty, it might turn out to be a pleasure, it might be both, it might be neither. That was for the future; for the present he must find her — only that.

His eyes keenly scrutinized the shore, the while he walked as rapidly as he could to the extreme

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

southern end of the island; there he faced northward and, choosing a middle course, steadily made his way toward the distant upper end. The southern end of the island was low, sandy, and open. The slope was toward the north, and the high hills were there. For several miles the land was sparsely wooded, with here and there a palm or fern, and once in a while in some depression a wild canebrake. He almost ran here; the country was so bare as to prevent any possibility of concealment from his eager investigation. Nevertheless he did not pass any coppice, or clump of woods, without carefully examining it. He was determined to find the unknown visitor of the night before, and he did his work with consistent thoroughness, noting, as he progressed, the various topographical features, the fauna—birds alone—and the flora that he met.

He discovered that the island was shaped something like an elongated hour glass and that all the high and wooded part was on the northern bulb. His search, when he passed the neck, was necessarily and unfortunately slower and more toilsome. As the island expanded, he had to range back and forth and from side to side. He re-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

alized that it was quite possible, notwithstanding the care he was taking, for the pursued to double back and get in the rear, but no asylum would be afforded thereby and the chase would be easily run down on the open part below the neck. He persevered, therefore, plodding on, refreshing himself at noon and resting upon a commanding knoll, from which he had all the east and west and south in view.

His task might have been more difficult had he not received certain assistance toward its accomplishment of which he was in ignorance and upon which he had not counted. The pursued who fled from him with mingled feeling of avoidance and desire was not, after all, unwilling to be caught.

The call of kind to kind was operating in another breast than his own and struggling with the timidity and strangeness of half a score of years of utter isolation. That growing willingness to be overtaken, however, was only sufficiently strong to cause the pursued to maintain a place just ahead and out of sight of the pursuer. Enough precaution was taken, and enough care was used, to keep just beyond reach and hearing, but no attempt was made really to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

get away or to seek absolute concealment. Thus during the long afternoon the two plodded on. It was a very ancient situation, indeed—hunter and hunted. Male and female created He them, and for that purpose, I wonder?

The island ended in a high rocky knoll, the top of which was a level, grass-covered, flower-decked plateau. From the seaward edge the cliff fell sheer down perhaps three hundred feet. The little savannah, an acre or more in extent, was bordered to landward by trees surrounding on one side a bare pyramidal mass of rock; the outer edge was clear, and from it one had a fair view of the long eastward side of the island, the encircling barrier reef upon which the waves forever broke, and the shining strand far below where Captain Stephen Cleveland had come ashore.

The tired pursuer was conscious that, if his day's task had been a success, he would here find the object of his long hunt, since he had now reached the *ultima Thule* of the island. As he burst at last from the curtaining trees, he stared surprised. There upon the sheer and giddy verge, one foot almost overhanging the cliff,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

leaning forward slightly, her body supported by the other as if about to take a final step out into the blue, her figure clearly silhouetted against the sky, lightly and gracefully poised as a bird of the air, stood a girl — nay, a woman — looking back at him.

Perhaps fifty paces intervened between the two. Captain Stephen Cleveland came to a dead stop in wild amaze. He had not expected a picture of such fairylike beauty. He had not anticipated such exquisite grace of form and position. Some wood nymph, some sprite, some naiad of other days apparently had suddenly risen before him.

How long he stared can not be known. At last, and slowly as if in the presence of a shrine, he stepped forward. As he did so, the woman turned and faced him, her hands crossed over her graceful but still immature and undeveloped breast. She stood shrinkingly before him, as Eve might have drawn back before Adam. Which was the more surprised by the sight of the other is not to be determined; they both stared a space, silent, motionless. It was from the man that the initiative came. With steady step he approached

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

her, the woman waiting in an attitude of appeal, welcome, and alarm commingled.

Although Captain Stephen Cleveland had begun to improve from his burns and bruises, and although he had washed himself as well as might be, he was still sufficiently disfigured not to present a very happy or fascinating appearance. He might have stood for satyr, if she overlooking the sea played nereid. Still he enjoyed one advantage: in the country of the blind, it is said, the one-eyed are kings, and Captain Stephen Cleveland was the only man present.

The outward and visible were all in which he resembled a satyr. There was something so innocent, so girlish, so appealing in the woman, that even a brute would have forborne to harm her — Una and the lion! Although he had no appearance of a gentleman, or what is properly supposed to be such, still he had not forfeited his claim to that ancient and honorable degree, and he had no intention of doing so.

He stopped his slow progress at last immediately in front of the woman. As he did so she dropped her hands with a little gesture of abandonment or renunciation, as if to say,

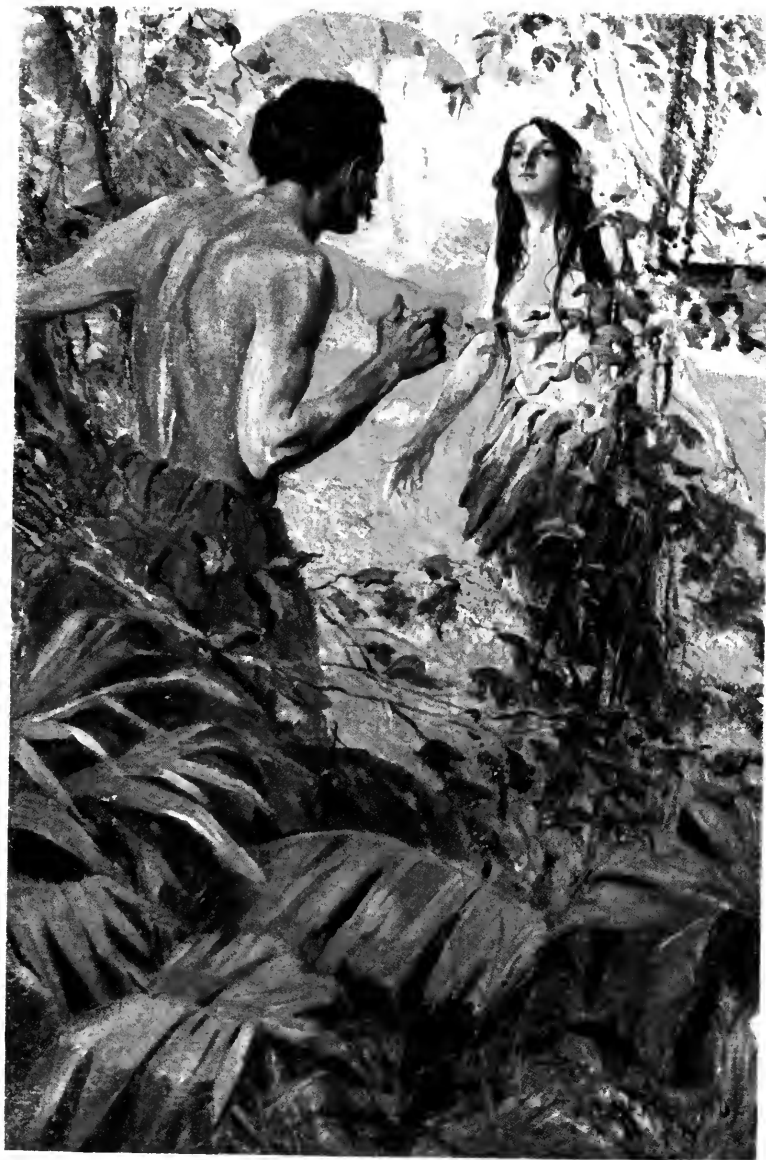
AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“Here am I at your mercy! What will you do with me?”

A very old and a very natural question between man and woman, indeed, under the circumstances and under many other circumstances, like and unlike as well. There was no present answer to that interrogation. Language apparently occurred neither to the one being nor the other. The man carefully inspected the woman, and the woman with equal interest returned the scrutiny. What she saw we know; what he saw it is difficult to describe.

She was not a tall woman and certainly not an old one. He judged that she was scarcely twenty. She was as dark as he; yet, in spite of the tropic suns to which she was evidently habitually exposed, there was a certain paleness in her face, and her eyes were frankly blue.

Her raven-black hair curled naturally and fell in a thick and tangled mass upon her exquisitely graceful shoulders. In its shadows she had thrust a gorgeous scarlet blossom. Around her waist she had fashioned some kind of a leafy covering, which depended half way to her knees. For the rest, she was as nature had made her, and



The being before him seemed an airy fantasy, a part of the witchery of woodland, a creature of the gentle breeze

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

nature had made her very symmetrical, very graceful, very beautiful.

There was no hint of passion or profanation in the direct and frankly open inspection which the man gave the woman. The situation was so unusual, so unconventional, that considerations inevitable under other circumstances did not obtrude themselves; and besides all that, the heart of Captain Stephen Cleveland was too completely filled by the image of Julia his wife for any other woman, however beautiful, however charming, to displace her. And he was a clean-minded man, a clean-hearted, simple soul, as sailors frequently are, with a great reverence for all women, the more strong because of his great love for one woman.

The being before him seemed very young, very immature, very innocent, very fair—an airy fantasy of springtime and dewy morning, a part of the witchery of woodland, a creature of the gentle breeze, of white-crested foamy waves. He stared entranced, charmed by her, as he might have impersonally studied a picture or a statue; as Pygmalion might have looked on Galatea before he loved her and she came to life.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH CAPTAIN STEPHEN CLEVELAND FINDS
HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH A PROBLEM

AS I have said, neither being seemed to think of speech. The woman had little recollection of humanity. She could not have placed the man. The man had enjoyed some experience in the South Seas, and she who confronted him, he was sure, was not native thereto; there was too much whiteness in her skin, too much brightness about her for one of the aborigines. She was evidently a castaway.

Who or what this child-woman might be, he could not tell. He had no idea whatever that she could speak any language that he could understand, and for that reason he had said nothing. He admitted to himself, especially now that he had seen her, that he was distinctly glad that she was there, anything was better than the loneliness as before; and yet, he would not have been a man had he failed to realize how immensely she com-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

plicated life, that she immediately became a problem, the solution of which would undoubtedly involve some kind of duty, the invariable concomitant of all problems.

He recognized, half whimsically, the strangeness of the situation. He was just an honest, simple-hearted mariner, happily married to a woman whom he devotedly loved, suddenly separated from her (he could think no other than that this separation was forever), and cast upon a desert island tenanted by another woman; a woman just as beautiful, just as fair in her way, albeit that was neither so high nor so noble a way as his wife's had been. And what was he to do with her? All these thoughts coursed through his mind as he stood staring at her.

He was wondering how he could communicate with her, when woman-like, she herself broke the silence. He had made the first step, she would have the first word. With a little gesture of entreaty, outstretching her hand, bending forward her body in a way like her every other movement altogether charming, she gave utterance to speech. She spoke slowly, haltingly as might a child who is not quite familiar with the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

words it desires to use, or as a person recovering from the silence of a long illness, who has not the nervous energy for a rapid, fluent conversation, — although it was evident she was not lacking in nervous force or bodily vigor. She uttered a few words in a language that was smooth, flowing, and graceful.

Captain Stephen Cleveland had voyaged to many parts of the world and was a very good linguist of a rough-and-ready sort. The woman spoke French; he understood her perfectly, and was glad he could speak her language sufficiently well for all practical purposes. What she said so slowly and so hesitatingly was, in effect,

“Please don’t hurt me.”

Somehow that petition and acknowledgment seems to typify the plea of primitive woman to primitive man. At first Captain Stephen Cleveland did not answer the question.

“You are French!” he exclaimed, in great surprise. He was able to address her with ease, even if not with grammatical nicety or Parisian purity of accent; but she was not critical, and answered brightly, a smile illuminating her face as she did so:

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“But yes; and you?”

“I am American.”

“That is next to France,” she continued, strangely stumbling in her speech all through the ensuing conversation, evidently thinking hard to recall the unwonted words to her tongue.

“My name is Stephen Cleveland; and yours?”

“*Félicité de Marigny, monsieur.*”

“I am very glad indeed to meet you, Miss Felicity,” answered Captain Stephen Cleveland of New England, primly and without a thought of the ridiculousness of his formal and conventional reply to this Greek goddess on that wind-swept hill in that unknown island.

It was not thus one should address spirits like Ariel, compact of the air, the sea foam, the tropic blossom, and the sunshine, surely! After he spoke, he put out his hand to the woman, and she wonderingly yet instinctively met it with her own small and slender palm. Captain Stephen Cleveland shook hands vigorously, and then “Miss Felicity,” as he called her then and thereafter, and as we shall name her during the part she plays in this true relation, repeated her question:

“You won’t hurt me, will you?”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“On my life, before God, I will not,” said Captain Stephen Cleveland, earnestly.

He uttered that vow freely and unreservedly, and he meant to keep it; and without a doubt he would do so, in so far as in him lay.

“Thank you,” returned the other simply and gratefully.

There ensued an awkward pause, during which neither appeared to know what to do or say next; and then it was Captain Stephen Cleveland who spoke.

“I have chased you all day,” he said. “I am very tired; you have many things to tell me, doubtless, and there is much you would like to know. Let us sit down.”

“Come this way,” said the girl, turning and speeding lightly along the cliff edge.

At the farther end, as I have said, a mass of rock among the trees was lifted above the plateau and beneath it there ran a grassy path along the face of the rock. Following his guide, Captain Stephen Cleveland presently found himself in a charming little grotto, so situated and of such contour, that once within one would be safe from almost every rain and storm that blew. Furniture

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

there was none. A scattered pile of dried fern leaves in one corner indicated a sleeping-place.

"I live here," said the castaway, with a little bow.

She had all the ease of manner and self-possession of a French woman, and nature and her unrestrained condition only emphasized its ease and elegance. Yet her bow and graceful gesture seemed oddly formal and out of place. The woman sat down on a convenient boulder, and the man followed her example.

"How long have you been here?" he began.

"I don't know."

"Have you no idea?"

"I remember that I was ten years old — when the ship was lost."

"Seven or eight years at least," commented Captain Stephen Cleveland.

"Yes, I think so."

"I wonder you have not forgotten how to speak."

"Every day I sing the songs my mother taught me; every day I stand on the cliff and speak to myself and the sea; every night I say my prayers before I sleep."

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“You were cast away on this island?”

“Yes.”

“How was that?”

“It was a ship of war; my father was the captain; he was exploring other seas and other worlds.”

“The name of the ship, do you recall it?”

“*Le Brillant*, I think.”

“Oh, she was lost at sea and never heard of. I was in Bordeaux when the matter was being discussed, and I remember perfectly, — she was a French frigate exploring the South Seas. Her captain was — let me see — a Count Bernard de Marigny, I think.”

“My father,” said the girl tremulously.

“And you are a countess, a great lady in your own right, mademoiselle.”

“I know not what that is,” answered the girl sadly. “I am only a castaway.”

“What happened to the ship?”

“Her masts were broken off in a storm. She sprung a leak, and we left her — I do not remember — we were a long time in a small boat. Many died, my mother last of all — something cast the boat upon this island — I ate and drank

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

what I found—I prayed to die, monsieur; but it could not be, and here I am.”

She threw up her hands with a characteristic shrug of her pretty shoulders, charmingly French.

“Have you never seen a ship since then?”

“Once or twice in all that long time, but far away, and I could not call them to me—so I have lived here alone—but I have been well and happy.” She laid her hand upon her heart. “And now I have you, monsieur.”

“Poor child!” exclaimed Captain Stephen Cleveland, who had eagerly followed her halting speech.

He shook his head gravely. Was he a gift to be desired by this girl? Would he indeed prove so? Time, the determinator, would finally answer that question.

“But you, monsieur,” asked the girl, “how did you come here? I saw your ship on the rocks yonder; I saw you come ashore. It was I who placed the food near you while you slept. I was glad to see you come, but I was afraid. Now I am no longer afraid, and more glad. Oh, how frightened I was when you caught me

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

last night! I watched you search for me to-day. I was just ahead of you—I might have hidden longer, but you would have found me in the end, why not? I am at your mercy.”

“You have nothing to fear from me, young lady.”

“Call me *Félicité*, monsieur,” said the girl, instinctively appreciating the emptiness of titles and the worthlessness of form in such a case.

“Very well, Miss Felicity,” answered the other. “You want to know how I came here?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied the girl. “I have been so anxious to understand.”

Rapidly he outlined his story. He did not enter into any personal details. He was naturally a reticent man. These did not concern the Spirit of the Island. He told only of the loss of the ship; his grief was too overpowering for him even to allude to his wife and her death to this chance acquaintance, this lively and engaging stranger, this sweet sharer of his solitude.

Although he told the story briefly, without unnecessary amplifications, the child before him understood something of what he had gone through, something of the struggle, something

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of the consequences. Her bosom rose and fell with emotion, her eyes filled with tears, she sat entranced. So Desdemona listened when Othello spoke. She interrupted his story with many ejaculations of pity, surprise, and anguish, and hung breathlessly on his final words.

“And so,” ended Captain Stephen Cleveland, “we are here together, Miss Felicity. I am going to help you and you are going to help me. I am going to try to get us both away from this island, and get you back to your friends, and you are going to help me to keep from going mad with loneliness and sorrow and despair.”

“Did you so love your ship, monsieur?” she asked.

“Not so much the ship.”

“And your men?”

“Not so much the men.”

“Was there another?”

“Yes.”

Captain Stephen Cleveland put his hand up to his face and then stared away seaward.

“And was she — ”

“She was borne away from the ship in a small

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

boat. It can not have survived the storm that followed. She must be there."

He pointed out toward the sea, far beneath.

"But no, monsieur," answered the girl simply, pointing upward, "perhaps there."

A very simple and unsophisticated child of nature, this woodland beauty. Captain Stephen Cleveland's eyes followed her upward glance. Might that heaven above fall upon him, he thought swiftly, if by any act of his she were ever robbed of that sweetness and that innocence which were her only portion.

A brave and honest resolution. O stranded mariner, see that you keep to it!

CHAPTER VII

SHOWING HOW QUESTIONS OF PROPRIETY WOULD
OBTRUDE THEMSELVES EVEN IN EDEN

THE awakening, the pursuit, the meeting, the subsequent conversation, had taken the greater part of the day. Neither of the islanders made any account of time. They had nothing upon earth to do, and forever apparently to do it in. But the declining sun admonished one at least that the day was far spent and the night was at hand. Captain Stephen Cleveland rose to his feet, remarking,

“It will soon be night, Miss Felicity, and I must go back to my palm tree.”

“Why not stay here?” artlessly asked the young woman in entire innocence. “It is pleasant at night here: you can hear the roar of the sea away below, and when the dark comes, you can look out and see the bright stars.”

Captain Stephen Cleveland shook his head.

“I am afraid not,” he answered.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“There is room there,” urged the girl naively, pointing to an inviting niche on the other side of the little cavern. “We can soon gather leaves enough outside to make you a bed.”

“It would n’t be proper,” he declared decisively.

“What is this ‘proper’?” she queried, with Arcadian simplicity.

And again Captain Stephen Cleveland opened his mouth to speak and perforce stopped to think before he answered. After all, what was this propriety of which he spoke, and how far did it obtain upon this desert island? Convention being a creature of human environment, to what extent did its rigid and rightful rules and laws prevail in isolation? Had those social prescriptions, then, any force inherent in themselves? Did those laws and customs apply to one man and one woman alone upon an island, shut off from the world? Did *les convenances* obtain in Eden? Captain Stephen Cleveland pulled himself together with a shake of his head. He thought he understood and could explain.

“The world —” he began confidently, and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

then he stopped a third time, for he found his task harder than he had anticipated, after all.

What was he about to say? What had the world to do with them? Could its call reach them across a thousand leagues of unfrequented seas? Did its writs run in deserted islands in unexplored oceans?

The girl had risen with him, she had come closer to him and frankly laid her hand unsuspectingly and in sweet abandon upon his arm. There he stood, his arms folded across his breast, a favorite attitude with him, reflecting deeply. She evidently was quite anxious to know why he could not stay, and what he meant by "proper," and he faced a growing difficulty in definition.

It was not her fault that she had the mind of a child in the body of a woman; it was not her fault that her mind was even more childish than that of an ordinary ten-year-old girl (who is today, God knows, entirely too sophisticated), for much that would have been evident to such an one under other conditions had been forgotten in isolation. She would awaken, perhaps, some day, to realization, but there had been nothing yet

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

in her life to arouse and develop her latent consciousness of right and wrong upon these lines.

Captain Stephen Cleveland recognized all this and wondered vaguely whether such development would come through him or not. He had not much time, however, for speculation, for a very pressing problem confronted him, with which he must deal at once in some way.

"I am much older than you," he began lamely enough, in his perplexity.

"Many years?"

"Eight or nine, I should judge, but hundreds of years older in experience and in the knowledge of the world."

"And what is the world to us?"

"Nothing now, perhaps, but it may be some time, and when we get back to it you will be glad, that — In short, you must stay at this end of the island at night and I will stay below there. I can't explain it to you."

"I do not see why."

"Whether you do or not," said Captain Stephen Cleveland, peremptorily, "it will have to be as I say."

The girl drew herself up, ancient race, an-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

cestral pride of blood, and inherited habit of command showing in her face and bearing. She had been absolutely unrestrained for so many years that she had forgotten what control of any kind was like. She resented it instinctively with voice and bearing. Neither was she, a child for years of absolute and utter freedom, willing to submit to any other than her own will. On the other hand, Captain Stephen Cleveland was an equally resolved and determined personality, and when he had decided upon a course of action there was tremendous fixity about him. He could not easily be shaken even in trifles; and this was by no means a trifle, for the future of both of them depended on his firmness. The two looked at each other. Level glance met level glance. The woman first gave way and with a gesture and movement indicative of her resentment and disdain, she turned from him.

“Go your way,” she said.

“I will see you in the morning,” Captain Stephen Cleveland assured her.

“If you can find me, perhaps,” was the petulant answer.

The man laughed. The woman sprang

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

in front of him, again, her hands clasped, her bosom heaving, anger flaming in her eyes and cheeks. Captain Stephen Cleveland stepped back surprised and astonished by this sudden display of passionate temper.

“You laughed at me,” cried the girl; “you won’t do what I want you to—you make me mind you, and you laugh.”

“You will thank me some day for all these things. I will return in the morning. Good-night,” he added briefly and turned away. Before he passed the corner of the rocky path that would hide him from view, he looked back. “No prowling around me at night as before,” he said sternly.

“I would rather die alone than look at you—ever again,” answered the woman tempestuously.

She waited until he had gone, and then she flung herself down on her rude leafy couch and burst into a flood of rare tears. She had wept often when she first came to the island, but those tears had been long forgotten, and for years she had given way to no such outburst as on this night. She could not understand why she wept,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

either. Her small body shook with sobs, the harder to bear because they were quite unexplainable. The key to the solution of her sorrow was not yet in her possession; some day she would find it, and with it open mystic doors and go through them into other lands. Upon what joy, sorrow, life, death, would she come in that other world beyond the surrounding seas of ignorance, and innocence, seas that now shut her in, like the ocean, the island?

Divining something of the woman's thoughts; alive keenly to the possibilities of the situation; fully aware of its difficulties, especially since they were so much enhanced by the absolute innocence and trust, the unaffected, straightforward, ingenuous simplicity and sincerity of his new companion; quite resolved to do his whole duty in the premises, yet realizing with a shudder of appreciation how difficult that duty would inevitably become, Captain Stephen Cleveland at last reached his palm-tree home. He was confronted by a situation the like of which his fondest imagination had never conjured before his vision.

Here upon this island, alone with him, dwelt

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

a woman. A woman with a child's mind and a child's soul, but in all other things not at all a child. And with possibilities of rapid and certain development by which the child's mind and the child's soul would be turned into a woman's mind and a woman's soul in a moment, to fit the woman's body and the woman's power. He was absolutely alone upon this island with her, and his will would inevitably be her will also. By her own testimony, which his knowledge corroborated, ships rarely visited those seas. For a time unknown the sails of but one or two had whitened the distant horizon for a moment, as they passed by unnoticing.

The world knew nothing of them, in all likelihood never would know anything of them. He could do what he would with that child-woman! What would he do?

Never for a moment did her presence displace the recollection of his wife. However charming this woodland sprite, she could in no way take the place in his heart of the woman brave, splendid, and true whom he had loved so long, and in whose possession for the few short months

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of wifhood he had found happiness sweeter than his every hope or wildest dream.

As he thought of her whom he had loved long since and lost a while, he groaned aloud. The island was so lonely, there was nobody there to note or mark or care what he did. He threw himself down and buried his face in his hands. His body shook with emotion. He would never see her again. She was dead, she must be dead. He wished that he, too, might die, that his life might go out on that still night, on that island under these quiet stars. Why had one been taken, and the other left? For him also to live was Christ — suffering — to die would indeed be gain.

“ Julia, Julia,” he murmured, in low, agonized, pathetic whispers.

And yet as he lay there, there came to him another thought; life always held some duty to be done, some task to be performed, some adventure to be achieved. Suppose his selfish prayers were granted, and she should come down from her aerie on the morrow, that Spirit of the Island, and find him dead upon the strand, how terrible would be her situation! While no one

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

had ever visited the island she had been ignorant of what human companionship meant, she had almost grown contented in her isolation; but now it would break her heart if he should die and leave her alone again with a new and soul-crushing conception of solitude. Had he a right to condemn her to that? And if he should seek her in the morning and find her gone forever, what would he feel? He must live; he had work to do; how was he to do it?

He sat up again and took further thought of the situation. Here he was naked and defenceless on this island; not a piece of metal of any sort was in his possession, he did not have even so much as a pocket-knife. How he craved a piece of steel! — not for a weapon but for a tool. There was nothing whatever on the island that would hurt him; any harm either received must come from the other; from humanity, not nature. There were no wild beasts on the island, no birds, even, of any size. There was nothing out of which to make a raft, a boat, a house even.

There was plenty on the island to satisfy physical needs. From reedy grass or from broad-leaved plant such covering for their nakedness as

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

decency required could easily be woven. Of fruits, nourishing and palatable, there was an abundance to be had for the gathering. He did not doubt that the lagoon abounded with shell fish, and perhaps other eatable fish, although he had no hook or line with which to catch them; nor could he make a fire by which to cook them. Fortunately, there was an unfailing supply of fresh water.

Having food and drink and raiment, could he therewith be content? If he only could have saved something from that wreck, he might have done something with it; but alas, he had nothing but his own two naked hands, and they availed little.

Nor was the girl of the island in any better case. He had spoken of helping her to get away from their prison; he recognized that he and she were marooned on that island and there was no possibility whatever of departure therefrom by their own unaided efforts. Ships might pass in the day or in the night; unless they came near enough, so that human beings could be seen from their decks, they had no means whatever of attracting attention. There was no way of making

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

a fire, for instance, that he could compass or devise.

Life had been so rich, so full for him, and now, in the twinkling of an eye, he had been thrown back into prehistoric times, with the brain of his day, yet with no escape from that far-off past. He could live and vegetate like a denizen of the Stone Age, he and the woman together. Would the morals, the habits, and the practices of the Stone Age supervene? God forbid! Had the Stone Age any morals, or was it neither moral nor immoral, simply unmoral? Would man and woman mate as the birds of the air, or the beasts of forest and field? God forbid, again!

Deep down in Captain Stephen Cleveland's heart was a vein of New England piety; within his breast dwelt the New England conscience; in his mind was the old principle *noblesse oblige*. The constraint of his birth, the custom of his ancestry, the habit of his rearing, were upon him; they made him strong. He would remain, please God, a Christian sailor, an officer, and a gentleman.

Ah, though naked upon a desert island, he did not realize that even there it takes two to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

make a bargain, and that even the weakest and most untutored woman must be counted as a decisive factor in any given proposition into which she enters never so remotely. Yet Captain Stephen Cleveland would have been a fool had he not recognized some of the possibilities of his situation, if not all of them. He would be a coward, he felt, did he allow circumstances to control him.

Thrown in touch with a nymph or a dryad of prehistoric time, absolutely removed from human censure or applause, from human restraint or encouragement, from the world with all its voices good or bad, and left alone with an utterly ignorant, wholly innocent, woman on his hands, could he preserve his moral integrity, or could he not?

Of old temptation entered the Garden of Eden, and perhaps Adam spoke more wisely than he knew when he laid the burden of his fall upon the woman, in those cowardly and evasive words with which man, proud man, has endeavored to justify himself ever since: "*The woman tempted me, and I did eat.*"

Should the woman tempt him? Should he transgress the law of moral well-being and enjoy

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the liberty and license of unrestraint? Would some Voice Divine in this island Eden call him to account? Was he this woman's keeper? Would there be visited on him, indeed, some mighty penalty for failure like the primeval sweat-bedewing curse upon Adam's face from God's hand? Did God ever walk with man in this South Sea paradise in the cool of the evening, or was He to be found only in the busy haunts of men?

Upon the heights, there, the woman wakeful, restless, for the first time in years, tossed feverishly to and fro. What vague, unrealized, incoherent dreams were hers? This godlike figure that had commanded her, that she had obeyed, that promised so much, that was so wise, who was to help her, and whom she might help—what should she learn from him? What would he do with her? Singular, but in the twinkling of an eye she realized instantly and instinctively that the problem would be that way, that her freedom was gone, that her fate absolutely depended upon another.

What would he do with her? She could not analyze the delicious thrill that filled her heart,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

as she formulated that thought. What would he do with her, indeed?

Oh, weak and feeble woman! Oh, innocence so childlike, so complete, so helpless, so absolute, so overwhelming, what wilt thou in thy turn do with that strong man upon the strand?

BOOK III
A GREAT PURPOSE



CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THE READER HEARS A PITEOUS CALL
ACROSS THE SEAS

BENEATH a blazing sky floats heavily a wave-blanchèd boat like to that in which Felicity drifted years ago, before the beginning of this story, a tiny dot upon the infinite expanse of a wide sea, motionless amid a vast extension of absolute and unrelieved calm.

Four occupants that once were human tenanted that frail cockle-shell. Four others in the long days had died, and the survivors had cast them quickly overboard. Of the four left, one lies huddled forward, dead; another leans against a thwart, dying; a third, an old, grizzled, gigantic form of man sits aft, holding mechanically with his gaunt fingers a steering oar, instinct apparently moving him to keep it fast. His bloodshot haggard eyes stare forward toward the sky line; his parched lips are drawn as it were, snarlingly, back over his clenched teeth; his skin is ghastly yellow; his clothes hang like bags on his gaunt form. Like some fierce animal at bay he sits there. He moves not, he

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

speaks not. He only stares and stares fixedly ahead.

At his feet and reclining against him is something that tattered, faded clothes, at least, proclaim a woman. She, too, lies huddled in a heap, her head resting against the man's knee. Her bright hair, no longer lustrous, hangs to one side in a tangled mass; her eyes are shut; she looks as one dead, save for a slow, labored respiration.

God alone knows the horrors of those weeks in that open boat. He alone marked the awful struggle to keep afloat in the height of the storm. He alone observed them day by day measuring out the food, reducing it to the veriest morsel, until it was all gone, and with it the last drop of water. He alone watched them gnaw the leather of their shoes. He alone saw one after another die. He alone noted the battle for the remains of the woman's life and honor which the boatswain waged with the maddest and the most frantic of them all. He alone saw the self-sacrifice of that great-hearted old sailor, who put by his own portion that he might give it when all the rest was gone, to the weaker woman. A rough man, but with a mother's heart.

As the boatswain had fought to keep the others

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

away from her, so he fought to keep life within her. She loathed life; she had lost her love, and losing that, she had lost all; she was fain to die. He would not have it so. By entreaty, cajolery, and at last by force he made her eat and drink. He kept her alive. He had lived himself without food, because of his superhuman strength and hardihood; but his powers were almost spent, he could do nothing more for himself, nothing more for the woman.

God, who had observed it all, had done nothing for them as yet. He had not even taken pity, it seemed. And the brave old sailor had fought so good a fight, he had kept the faith that Captain Stephen Cleveland had reposed in him as a man might; now he could only sit and stare seaward and wait for the end.

The woman stirred uneasily at his feet; from between her lips words broke:

“Stephen! Stephen!” — that was all.

It was a word the boatswain had heard a great many times during those long weeks, but he bent to hear it again, perhaps for the last time.

“Stephen,” came hoarsely, whisperingly from those cracked lips. “Stephen! Stephen!” again and again in mournful despairing iteration.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

no disorderly hallucination, no dream, but real. He tried to collect his scattered senses. He saw that she was sailing by them with her port tacks aboard; he realized, with a sailor's instinct, being almost too far gone for reason, that if she did not change her course, if those on board her did not see the whaleboat, if seeing her they did not have hearts of men and would not come to seek her, it would be all over; neither he nor the woman could exist another day.

This was the first ship they had seen in the long weeks of waiting: he had thought there would never be any other in those deserted seas. The boatswain had not believed that he any longer possessed a heart, so empty had been his bosom; but now it beat and throbbed so that it was like to choke him. If he could only cry aloud, if he could only rise to his feet! But he could do nothing but sit and listen to the woman from time to time muttering ever the same words —

“ Stephen! Stephen! ”

Oh, could Captain Stephen Cleveland hear that call?

But while the boatswain stared and prayed voicelessly, something happened on board the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

ship; she reached up into the wind, her head sails shivered, her mainyard was swung. The sound of a sailor's chanty came faintly down the wind. They had been seen, the ship was headed toward them.

Rescue! Salvation! Thank God!

The boatswain loosened his grasp on the gun-wales; he bent down slowly and painfully; he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the woman; he shook her tenderly with trembling arm.

"Mrs. Cleveland," he said hoarsely, in a ghastly whisper, "wake up, ma'am, there's a ship; we're saved."

And again from the lips of the woman mad, unheeding, came that hollow voice murmuring, as ever:

"Stephen! Stephen!"

Oh, Captain Stephen Cleveland, why can you not hear that wild, that passionate appeal, the ultimate expression of a human heart that loved you?

CHAPTER IX

HOW ONE COMES BACK THROUGH THE GOLDEN GATE ALONE

THE ship approaching proved to be the whaler *Susan and Jane* of New Bedford, six months out from her home port, and bound on a cruise through Behring's Strait to the Arctic Seas, after sperm. Her master, one Derby Crowninshield, was well known to old Foresman, the big boatswain of the *Swiftsure*. He and Julia Cleveland were the only living people in the whaleboat, the other man having joined his dead fellow just before the rain came.

As the *Susan and Jane* rounded to, close aboard them, even the iron soul of the boatswain gave way; he was alike past speech and past action, utterly incapable of explanation. Captain Crowninshield was a man of experience, however, and a glance put him in possession of the essential facts; after the first unanswered hail he asked no questions. He realized that the boatswain

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

was too weak even to catch and make fast a line; smartly, therefore, he dropped one of his own boats overboard, and in a few minutes she hauled the other boat alongside the ship. As the quickest means of disposing of the proposition, and because even though she was in bad condition a whaleboat would always come in handy on the long cruises, Captain Crowninshield hooked the falls to the *Swiftsure's* boat, and ran her up to the davits of the *Susan and Jane*. For the fierce cachalots often destroyed boats with their powerful tails, and sometimes crushed them into splinters between their awful jaws. It was an easy matter for hands rude yet tender to pass in-board the woman and the man.

There was a homelike appearance to the clean decks of the squat, bluff-bowed, stumpy-masted old whaler, for Captain Derby Crowninshield had on board with him Susan his wife, and little Jane his daughter—hence the name of his ship; but the dirtiest collier would have been a heavenly haven after the whaleboat. Mrs. Crowninshield, her womanly sympathy stirred and her motherly activities quickened by the sad plight of her forlorn sister, at once took charge

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of Julia Cleveland, while the whaler's boatswain and one or two of the harpooneers busied themselves with the boatswain of the *Swiftsure*, who was made comfortable in one of the spare cabins of the whaler. Julia was given the mate's room, that officer gladly turning out and doubling up for the time being with one of his juniors.

While these arrangements were being made, the *Swiftsure's* whaleboat was taken from the davits and placed amidships on the *Susan and Jane*, the two bodies it contained being carefully lifted up and presently prepared for burial by being sewn up in weighted hammocks. The other boat was next hoisted into its accustomed place, and the ship filled away on her course. Her first stop would be Honolulu, something like fifteen hundred leagues to the northeast; but before she reached there, her captain intended to do a deal of random cruising in the hope on the way of getting his "irons" into some of the big "fish" he was after.

About all that he gleaned from the human flotsam he had picked up that afternoon, was that they were the sole survivors of the clipper *Swiftsure*, burned at sea; that the man was the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

boatswain thereof, and the woman . Captain Stephen Cleveland's wife.

The next morning, however, the boatswain had sufficiently recovered to participate in the burial of the two men, who were reverently launched into the deep, as Captain Crowninshield read the service. Later, the old man brokenly told his rescuer the necessary details of the awful tragedy through which they had gone. Captain Crowninshield, though an old man, had known Captain Stephen Cleveland, and he had been a good friend of the family of the captain's wife. He was deeply touched by the unfortunate position in which Julia Cleveland found herself; and he told the boatswain, whose fidelity and devotion he heartily commended, that he was glad to offer the two asylum on his ship for so long a time as they chose to avail themselves of it.

He would land them in Honolulu in due course, or if they wished it, transfer them to any homeward bound vessel they might overhaul, which would give them a better chance of reaching the United States the sooner. He offered to sign on the boatswain and give him a generous "lay"

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

in his own ship if he would make the cruise with him. But Foresman refused this.

“No, sir,” said he, “Cap’n Stephen Cleveland placed his lady in my charge; I can’t do anything else until I git her home to her friends, thankin’ ye kindly jest the same, sir.”

Captain Crowninshield could not but approve this resolution. However, the boatswain, so soon as he was able for duty, volunteered and offered to do a seaman’s work so long as he was aboard the *Susan and Jane*, and for that Captain Crowninshield promised him liberal pay; also, he bought the whaleboat from the boatswain at a high value, on Julia Cleveland’s account.

That poor lady was in no condition to transact that or any other business. Under the careful nursing of the captain’s wife, she recovered her physical well being in a reasonable time; indeed, her recuperation was the more rapid in that she was not distracted by any recollection of what she had gone through or what she had lost; for reason did not come back with health. She was as gentle and as tractable as she was beautiful. Indeed, there was a strange softness and an unwonted tenderness in her demeanor. She had

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

been a very independent and able woman in her normal condition, which made her docility in her madness the more surprising.

There she sits quietly, leaning against the rail, staring out to sea with a meaningless, vacant gaze. There was but one reasonable thing in her otherwise aimless actions: she always stared southward. What dim light of recollection breaking through her shadows invariably turned her otherwise aimless gaze in that direction?

Questions elicited no answer. Once in a while there broke from her lips those familiar words which the boatswain had heard so often, and hated, in the small boat, but which now in some strange way he loved to hear on the ship, perhaps because there was now no mournful note in them — only the love call of a bird to its mate:

“Stephen! Stephen!”

She speaks softly now, lingering upon the name; sometimes a little smile plays about her lips, as she calls the man she loved and loves. It seems that the sole evidence of intelligence which she can now give is to pronounce over and over again that cherished, beloved name, and to look always to the South Seas. Perhaps she speaks

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

it unconsciously that it may pass from her heart to a smaller heart now beating beneath her own, and of which as yet she knows nothing.

And what would Captain Stephen Cleveland feel if he could only see or know? If he could only hear that faint, low voice, last expression of devotion, murmuring over and over again his name? If he could only see the woman he loved and lost and yet will love on forever, the color again radiant in her cheek, the light once more shining in her bright hair, speaking his name, staring with eyes that see not, listening with ears that hear not? If he could only know of that smaller heart beating beneath the greater heart of the woman, and both of them his own?

But, alas! Captain Stephen Cleveland paces restlessly up and down the distant shore raging with all a man's furious impatience against the hopeless impotency of his position. He finds little solace or comfort in the beautiful maiden who watches him wistfully, who would fain walk ever by his side, whose heart goes out to him with a passion and a fire and an adoration, the more overwhelming since there is but one man in the world for her. And Captain Stephen Cleveland

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

who loves her not, who will not, can not, love her, ever, is that man.

Six months later, the voyage having been considerably shortened somewhat at last by the necessities of Julia Cleveland's condition, the lumbering old *Susan and Jane* dropped anchor in the beautiful harbor of Honolulu. With the money he had earned and what he had received from the sale of the whaleboat, something like six hundred dollars in his pocket, the boatswain took the captain's wife ashore. A faithful missionary and his wife having heard their story, opened a home to them. The boatswain, who had aged terribly from his experiences and in the face of his new responsibilities, parted from his friends with great regret, although to Julia no parting or meeting seemed to matter at all. Captain Crowninshield and his wife Susan and his little girl Jane were very sorry indeed to see the woman they had rescued from the jaws of death leave them; for they had grown quite used to her fair presence, to the gentle murmur of the lips which spoke from her heart those words never very long unsaid:

“Stephen! Stephen!”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

A week later, to Captain Stephen Cleveland, mariner, cast away by the sea upon a lonely Pacific island, and naturally believed to be dead by those who thought of him at all, and to his wife Julia, alone among strangers upon another island far away, yet washed by the waters of the same great sea, is born a son.

How often is such gift of life followed by death! How many times does the life pass from mother into child, and as the one comes the other goes! The event in this instance was contrary and fate played a cross purpose; for it was the child who died, and not the mother. He lived long enough for his first cries to pierce the dull hollow of the woman's ears and awaken her to life, for the first time since that awful night when she had seen the *Swiftsure*, rising and falling, now bright, now dark, across the troubled seas. At once recollection, memory, rushed back to Julia Cleveland and overwhelmed her. Upon her bed of pain she knew all. She looked into the face of the child she had brought into the world, and saw in its tiny features the image of her husband; and then the little voice was stilled, and the little soul went out into the night or the morning.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

The baby dying had broken her heart, but dying he had restored her mind. Again from her lips, but this time with all the passion in a woman's heart, burst that bitter cry:

“Stephen! Stephen!”

Captain Stephen Cleveland, oh, could you not hear that appeal? Could not the tiny voice of the babe that under other conditions and happier circumstances would have clung to his mother's breast for you to see, reach you? Playing with Felicity on the sand, striving for contentment, fain to crush out all recollections on that lonely, desolate shore, could you not hear?

The pre-natal voyage of life had been too much for him that was to have been another Stephen Cleveland, and now with returning reason bade fair to be too much for the new mother. With mind restored and recollection returned, the ministering friends feared for the life of Julia Cleveland. But youth, strength, a faint hope, a consuming desire, finally triumphed after months of suffering.

The woman, clothed and in her right mind, at last stood on the deck of a ship bound for San Francisco, and watched fade away into the dis-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

tance the faint vision of the Hawaiian shore. The old boatswain was with her. He had been her greatest comforter in his rude and rough way. She had learned how he had watched over and protected her; she had extracted from his unwilling lips, by careful questioning, the whole story of his sacrifice—how he had starved himself that she might eat; what had happened on the *Susan and Jane*; how he had unhesitatingly refused the advantages offered by Captain Crownshield, in order that he might discharge his duty to her; how he had resolved to devote himself entirely to her so long as she might have need of his services.

He was an old man, this William Foresman, old enough to be her grandfather; indeed, he had sailed with Captain Pellew, her own father, as a young man many years before. He had no ties, no family, nothing to take him away from her side. The fact that she had been committed to him by her husband, her long period of helplessness, the birth and death of the little son, the sorrow in her heart, had also touched him in a strange sort of a way; and the old sailor, beneath whose rough exterior a tender tide of life flowed,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

firmly resolved to give her everything he had, so long as she might have need of him. And Julia Cleveland accepted his devotion gratefully.

She had come to a definite resolution during her long convalescence; she needed the boatswain's assistance, and, engrossed by her desires and her intention, she accepted it without hesitation. There was a kind of noble selfishness in her attitude toward him, or toward any other man or woman who might be of service to her. But it was a selfishness that was begot of her great love and her determination not to accept her husband's death as a fact, until the failure of an undertaking which she intended to prosecute with all her life should convince her beyond peradventure that he had indeed gone down that night with his ship.

Many a time she had talked the situation over with the boatswain, who had no hope whatever that Captain Stephen Cleveland had survived. Every probability was against it. The dictum of experience was convincing as to the folly of cherishing such a belief, yet the boatswain could not deny that there was just a bare possibility that Captain Stephen Cleveland had not been

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

burned up before the rain might have saved him from that death. The crazy hulk might have survived the storm, which — but for the fact that it was a lifeboat, and because of his own skill and strength and the incessant toil of the men at the oars — would certainly have overwhelmed the whaleboat.

If the wreck of the *Swiftsure* floated after that storm, and if Captain Stephen Cleveland were still alive, he might have been picked up as they had been by some passing vessel. Yet the boatswain, judging from what he could recollect of the latitude and longitude of the disaster, urged that that was well nigh impossible, there being few or no vessels trading in those seas.

Failing that chance the hulk might have been blown or drifted upon some unknown desert island in those unfrequented parts of the Pacific, and he might still be there. But the sum of all these chances that he was alive amounted to only the faintest possibility. The odds against it were millions to one — but that one chance was enough for a love and a determination like those of Julia Cleveland.

Here she was, then, a young wife or widow, she

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

knew not which, practically penniless, approaching San Francisco, in which she could count on the possibility of only one friend, Hampton Ellison. Does the gentle reader not remember him? She would be three thousand miles by land from her own home, which was no longer home to her, since her mother had died, and where she had no living relatives. If she attempted to reach that home, another sea voyage around the Horn would be required, or else a cruise down the coast, a passage across the Isthmus, and thence through the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic; which would be expensive and more or less purposeless, for the continent was not then banded with steel.

What could she hope for when she got back to Salem? Sympathy perhaps; but she must earn her daily bread, and the proposition to return there and barely earn it did not fill her intention, or measure up to her ambition in the least degree. For Julia Cleveland intended to make money enough in some way to buy or charter a ship, to provision her for an indefinite cruise to the South Seas, there to search for her husband—if she did not hear from him before

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

—until she found him, or until every island in the vast archipelago had been visited and the search shown to be vain.

She was as beautiful as before, and in years as young; but grief, suffering, bereavement, had changed the woman outwardly and inwardly. The spirit of a high purpose, of a great quest, was upon her; something supernal in her soul was added to her; a new and rare beauty that might have brought the world to her feet, had she cared to see it there.

And so she came back as she had gone forth, through the Golden Gate. Alas! its radiance was dimmed by what had occurred between the exit and the entrance. She stepped ashore at San Francisco, young, inexperienced, penniless, friendless but for one old man as unversed in the ways of the world almost as she. It was to be years before she passed out of that Golden Gate again, following her hope, bound, though she realized it not, to that far-off island where Captain Stephen Cleveland stood waiting with little Felicity on the strand.

CHAPTER X

WHEREIN THE LONG EFFORT BRINGS SUCCESS TO
ONE, FAILURE TO THE OTHER

WERE this a story of adventure merely, I might dilate upon Julia Cleveland's life for the next three years. I might set forth some account of her doings in that strange new land filled with rude men seeking fortune in rough ways. I might disclose her sufferings, her disappointments, her failures. I might tell you who loved her, who helped her, who hindered her, who sought to harm her, who encouraged her.

I might write of the bitterness of hope deferred, of the long hours of despair, of the temptation to give up the struggle, of the renewal of the battle. I might picture the depths into which she was plunged, the height to which her love lifted her. I could show how her indomitable purpose sustained her, and how she fought on alone, save for the old boatswain,—little more than a protection now,—striving to wrest, as

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

others did, treasure from the hills, matching her woman's wit and her divine perseverance against man's superior strength and skill.

Alone until she met Ellison!

But this is not a story of adventure. Its interest to me is subjective, not objective. The Kingdom of God, it was said by the Wisest and Best, is within us! Environment is but a circumstance. Out of human hearts proceed the interests of this veracious chronicle; therefore I pass over these, to me, unmeaning details of all her labors that she had taken under the sun and shadow alike during this long period. And I present this New England wife to you at the climax and end of her efforts in the great cause to which she had dedicated youth, beauty, strength, love — herself.

Picture, if you will, a lonely cañon rived out of a great mountain. The time is sunset, and the land is California, so far from Captain Stephen Cleveland's island. A small camp had been pitched down the mountain by the side of a rushing brook, which babbled and purled in merry clatter along its tortuous and rocky way. By the side of the tent an old man sat smoking, quietly

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

meditating. Among the trees, facing the setting sun, by the side of another brook deep within the cañon higher up, a man and a woman, their heads close together, bent low over a pan in which something had been washed. Pick and shovel lay beside them.

If he was a fine specimen of young manhood, what shall be said of the woman? She was very tall and splendid, with length of limb that betokened race, and grace of bearing that bespoke breeding; with sunlit hair and eyes of truth and beauty; with every line of her figure, in spite of its mean poor garments, exhibiting the struggle between grace and strength. Purity, sweetness, light, radiated from her person. Pride and freedom, royal will and stubborn determination, were in her bearing; and in her face disappointment unutterable.

“It is no use, Julia,” said the man straightening up and throwing the contents of the pan away. “There is nothing.” He pitched the vessel to one side as he spoke, and stepped nearer to her. “Why not give up? He was my friend; I respected and loved him; he gave me a new start in life when he met me here four years ago,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

' grub-staked ' me, as they say out here; but he is certainly dead. You have given to so many ships tidings of his loss, and search has been made by every vessel that has touched San Francisco, or Honolulu, or Japan, in the past three years. All up and down the Pacific seas he has been looked for, and no tidings of him has ever come to you."

" Not one word," admitted the woman reluctantly. " It has been one long period of agonized disappointment; I have worked so hard, I have struggled so desperately! At first I begged and starved, and then you came and helped me. We have gone out together to try to find gold in these hills, and now we have failed."

" Yes," said the man, " but you have made a brave and honest try. Now give it up! I love you! Don't start back! Surely there is no treachery, there can be no wrong in that. No man could be with you as I have been, and not love you, — you have been so alone."

" Foresman was there," interrupted the woman.

" Yes, God bless him for a true brave heart, the like of which there are not many in the world; but he is an old man, — he must soon go, — and my love is young. I know, I quite realize, that I

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

am not such a man as Stephen Cleveland; there are few men like him. I know that you could never care for me as you did for him. But you can't go on this way; it is n't right for you to throw away your life, to give all that might be in it for the dead. Give me a chance. I have loved you ever since I found you almost starving in San Francisco, ever since you came into my life."

"With poor old Foresman sick in the one spot we could call home," murmured the woman, her thoughts reverting to that nadir of her fortune.

"Yes, and I have stayed to help you since then. I have had other opportunities, but I have put them aside to serve your purpose."

"You have indeed been very kind to us."

"I don't want anything on that account; I only mention it to show you that I was faithful. I have earnestly fought to help you into the arms of another man, if it were possible that he might be alive. You don't know what agony it has been. I am from North Carolina, and our blood runs hotter down there than in your colder North. I have kept it down, but now it all has to come

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

out. Can't you see, can't you realize, what you are to me?"

"I have been blind," said the woman, almost in a daze, "but I see it now. I might have seen it before, but I was thinking of some one else."

"You were cherishing, living on, a hope, which I do solemnly believe before God and man has no foundation. Ask Boatswain Foresman yonder, ask any one. If he had been picked up, he would have come back to you. It was n't possible for him to escape. He's dead, I know it. But think now of the living. Let me take you; be my wife; let me devote myself to you! You are young, years are before you. For God's sake, Julia!"

The woman shook her head, awake now to the necessity for silencing the passionate importunity of this wooing.

"Hampton," she answered simply, "I can't do it."

"Don't say that," he pleaded, struggling against the finality in her voice.

"Before God I married that man, I gave myself willingly to him until death parted us."

"But he is dead, — you are parted."

"I don't know it, and I won't believe it."

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“And if he were?”

The woman hesitated. Hampton Ellison was a wooer over whom any woman might hesitate.

“If he had been dead you would have married me, I am sure,” he persisted. “Would you not—”

“No,” answered Julia Cleveland softly. “God forgive me for hurting you; I can’t bear to do it. If I could give my life to promote your happiness, I would n’t hesitate to do it. But that isn’t saying much,” she went on, “since life for me without Stephen Cleveland is nothing. All these years since that moment he fell back into the flames, when I watched with straining eyes the light from that ship rise and fall, when I saw it go out and come back again, I have had but one idea, one hope, one dream. That was to go back and hunt for him, to search the seas, to explore island after island where he might have found a refuge, and where he might be now eating his heart out, looking across the empty waves for me, for the wife whom I know he would never forget.”

O Felicity, Felicity, thou little knowest what thou hast done!

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“But he is dead, he must be dead,” he persisted, in final and desperate urging.

“That would make no difference to me in this matter. I loved him living, and I love him dead, if so be that he is not. ‘Until death us do part’ is my creed. If he is gone, I shall wait alone until God restores me to him, if he is not to be restored to me before. Next to him, you have the highest place in my heart.”

“But the place is n’t high enough, is it, Julia?”

“No, not for what you want.”

The man turned and faced the west; he threw up his hands and stood a moment, his face raised to the declining sun. God have pity on him! she thought, tenderly enough, knowing his bereavement in her own. She turned away from him and buried her own face in her hands, and so the ancient sacrifice of prayer was offered upon that lonely mountain-side. It was the man who recovered himself first.

“I was a fool to speak,” he said, bitterly. “I have kept my heart hidden from you for all these years. We must forget it and go on as before.”

“No,” said the woman with clearer vision;



“No,” said the woman, “you have spoken, and there is that between us which will forever keep us apart.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“that’s impossible; you have spoken, and there is that between us which will forever keep us apart. You must go your way, and I must go mine.”

“I have no way but yours.”

“Don’t say that!”

“I have no choice.”

“You are a man, you must make a way.”

“And you?”

“My way is made.”

“And it leads—”

“To him, living or dead.”

Ellison bowed his head before her. “I accept your decision, but only because I have to,” he said bitterly.

“Good-bye,” said the woman, extending her hand. “I shall never forget what you have done for me, what you have been to me.”

“Oh, Julia, could n’t you —” he began, in final appeal.

“I shall leave you here,” was her firm answer. “The boatswain and I will go down by the trail to-night to the town.”

“Wait,” said the man, “I wasn’t quite fair with you.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

She stopped and looked at him in surprise.

“Not fair with me? What do you mean?”

“This miserable end of my dream,” he answered, “makes life as before impossible, as you say, yet I wanted to try my fortune before I told you. Please believe,” he continued earnestly, “that I did not intend to keep it from you; but I realized that if I could not win your affection before I told you, it would be absolutely impossible after.”

“What do you mean?” again asked the woman, more and more amazed, yet with a sudden hope thrilling in her heart and speaking in her voice.

“You are a rich woman: you can indulge your desires; you can buy a ship if you want to, or a fleet; you can go where you will,” he answered, seeing in his grief all that the tidings meant to her.

“My God!” exclaimed Julia Cleveland. “It can not be.”

“This claim has panned out; I deceived you. If my experience is anything, it will be worth millions; and one-third of it is yours, one-third of it is mine, and one-third of it belongs to old

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Foresman. You know we agreed to share alike. You can search for your husband to the end of time, if you will; and please God," said the man magnanimously, but with a-breaking heart, "since it is not to be I, that you may find him, alive, well, true."

Unable to comprehend the full nature of this overwhelming revelation, the woman stood staring at him.

"I suppose," continued Ellison slowly, "that you are resentful toward me for withholding the news from you, and in a way I deserve your blame; yet, in a way, every man is entitled to his chance. I did it; there was no use in it, but I am not sorry. I shall leave you, but I shall never forget you. These hours, with all the others that we have spent together, are burned in my memory. You are in my heart. Although you may be in the arms of another man, he can't take that comfort and that joy from me. I hope you will succeed; it is too bad to have both of us so wretchedly unhappy. Before I go, I will arrange all matters for you; and though you go back to Stephen, won't you try to forgive me, and not to forget me?"

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I will never forget you,” answered the woman, transformed by the glad tidings; and if Ellison loved her before, think how he loved her then! “It isn’t necessary to say I will forgive you. You have been everything that a man could be and should be to the wife of his friend.”

How deftly, he realized, she threw that wifehood of hers and that friendship of his into his face!

“And I never liked you so well, never wanted to help you so much, never wished I could do something for you, as I do at this moment,” she continued.

She took his hand, he let her have it unresistingly, she bent her head and pressed her lips to it a long time, and then she held it hard against her face. The tears welled up in her eyes—and she was not a woman who wept easily or on light occasion. So she put the baptismal seal upon it for self-sacrifice and reverence, and then turning away, left him there.

Facing the setting sun upon the mountain-side, he watched her go faster and faster down the path. He watched her while she spoke to the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

old boatswain. He watched them both as the latter leaped to his feet and followed her. Marking the buoyancy of her step, so light with hope, so swift with longing, that the old man could scarce keep by her side, he watched them as they vanished down the trail toward the distant town in the foothills of the range, leaving him behind, alone upon the mountain. She could not waste a minute now, having waited long years. She was so engrossed in the future that she never even once looked back at him.

He would live for her sake. He had come into her life when it was at its lowest ebb, on the streets of San Francisco, when she was begging bread, asking alms for the sick old man whose only resource she was, and she left him now at the very zenith of it. She had means in hand to convert hope into reality, means that he had helped her to acquire and which would throw her into the arms of another man some day, if he lived; into the arms of Captain Stephen Cleveland, at this moment closely clasped to the heart of little Felicity, far away on that island paradise in that distant summer sea!

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

If Ellison could have foreseen all that, would he have been glad or sorry? Would he have said that for every grief somewhere there is compensation? Would that knowledge have been compensation, I wonder?

BOOK IV
THE PASSING OF FELICITY

CHAPTER XI

WHEREIN LESSONS ARE TAUGHT AND LEARNED
THAT ARE NOT IN THE TEXT-BOOK

IT is not often that a man sits down to think over what he has accomplished in a period passed; and it is less often, even though he make the attempt honestly, that he has any great success in rightly measuring what has been achieved. Others, from the viewpoint of detachment, must do that for us. It was by no means a difficult task, however, in the case of Captain Stephen Cleveland. Waiting on the strand, idly contemplating the sea, the changeless, monotonous, unvarying ocean which broke on the barrier reef before him, as it had broken, perhaps, since the dawn of the world's morning, certainly long before it had been sighted by any human eye, he could honestly admit that he had accomplished practically nothing—nothing material, that is.

Back beneath the palms in a sheltered spot there was a rude wattled hut, such as an un-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

skilled man could make with no tools, but with his bare hands. A savage dweller in these latitudes would have laughed it to scorn. Up on the peak of the island some trifling work in the grotto for the comfort of the woman completed the sum total of his achievements.

He belonged to the tool-using race; given a few rudimentary instruments, he would have accomplished wonders. Without them, he was helpless. On this island there were no pocket knives, no bunches of keys, no fragments of flint or bits of steel. What is a castaway of romance without a last match and a bit of steel? He had neither. Nor did he chance upon the fruitful remains of some Spanish galleon stranded there centuries before. What is an unknown South Pacific island without those wrecks of the sea, any way, the experienced reader asks? Well, in this case they were not there.

Captain Stephen Cleveland had come ashore almost naked; even his shoes had been ruined in the fire. He had brought absolutely nothing into this, his new world, and although he had searched every foot of the island diligently, he had found in it nothing that would serve his purpose. Little

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Felicity was equally destitute. There were not even stones suitable to chip into axe-heads or rude primitive knives; or if there had been, to attempt to make such use of them never would have occurred to him. He was by no means a prodigy, and although he racked his brain he could effect nothing.

Stop! He had done something. With certain hard thorny spines for teeth and with pithy pieces of cane for backing, he had managed to make a tolerably good substitute for a comb—his one achievement that! He had combed his hair and his beard; he had taught Miss Felicity to comb her curly hair, and what had been a tangled mass when he met her, now hung in beautiful wavelets on her more beautiful shoulders.

Now it seems a little thing to be able to comb your hair, but just imagine what a deprivation it would be if you could not do it, especially if you were blessed with ample locks. That rude comb was apparently the one thing that tied him to civilization, the one thing that differentiated him from the most ignorant, barbarous, and degraded savage. It stood for order, for neatness,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

for cleanliness. With his hair combed, whimsically enough he often thought he stood for a gentleman; without it—he shuddered at the possibility.

But if he had accomplished nothing materially in those slowly dragging, long drawn out months and years, he had achieved other tasks. For one thing he had supplemented the hitherto exceedingly limited educational development of Felicity with stores, to her, of wonderful information which he had acquired in his wandering life. There was not much order or sequence in what he taught her, not much method in what he tried to impart, but compared to her simple ignorance he was a man of vast and varied learning.

The initiative was his, but with a keen thirst for information she soon sought and eagerly assimilated with growing interest and ease all he had to give her. Without writing materials or anything to read, his methods were necessarily hampered and the results accordingly imperfect, but what he had he freely gave to her. Indeed, his chiefest interest and pleasure in life lay in these daily, yet desultory, lessons.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Little Felicity was of quick apprehension, her mind was as lively as her spirits, her disposition more volatile than either. Although she did not know the meaning of the word coquette, indeed had never heard it—at least as far as she could remember, for they did not discuss things which would have led in that direction, if he could prevent it—she coquetted with Captain Stephen Cleveland the major part of the time. He was too self-centred and too wrapped up in other things to notice it at first; and when he did, it made little impression upon him save to amuse him greatly.

Naturally, among other things, he taught her about the world beyond the sky line, — the world from which they were as effectually shut off as Adam and Eve from Eden by the Angel of the Flaming Sword after the fall,—and he taught her about that world with a growing sense of its appeal and a constantly increasing bitterness and revolt in his mind at its absolute and apparently eternal inaccessibility. She liked to hear of this strange world, but it did not move her very much; it made no great appeal to her in her blissful ignorance of it. Her obvious con-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

tent in the present situation was quite in proportion to his equally obvious discontent.

The moon looks on many brooks, but this poor little brook had seen no other moon than this. There was no one with whom she could compare him; he was without doubt the greatest, the wisest, and the most magnificent being in the world to her. Like the "ivy that clings to the first met tree," she had no other object in life but this man.

He was not so circumstanced, he had other interests, other memories, other hopes, other ambitions, other dreams, other longings, which swept over him often and flung him into the most heart-breaking despairs. At such times she would steal to his side and take his hands in hers and try in some dumb way, in spite of her inexperience, to comfort him. Half mad and not master of himself, he would suffer these timid and yet appealing caresses, until, with recollection of where he was and what was toward bursting upon him, he would break away from her gentle detaining hands almost roughly, thrusting her aside. Plunging into unfrequented parts of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the island and bidding her not to follow him, there he would fight it out alone.

When he left her thus, unnoticed, neglected, cast aside, thrust away, she would fling herself down and sob as if her heart, too, would break. With the love that speedily sprung up within her breast for him, would come those natural concomitants of jealous hatred and resentment, which make human devotion and affection fall so far short of the divine.

So her secret is out: indeed, it would be as useless as impossible to withhold from the experienced reader this inevitable development of the story. The girl, ripening rapidly into full-grown womanhood, loved the man, and it is difficult to see how she could have done otherwise under the circumstances. She did not exactly know what love was or what it implied. She had enjoyed no experience of it; she had no opportunities of learning about it; it was one thing barred in his curriculum. She had only her instinct to guide her—the old, old instinct that has obtained from the beginning between man and woman, and will obtain.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

She begrudged every glance that he gave that was not hers; she coveted every moment in which she was not by him; she demurred to every thought he wasted upon any other being, or any other thing.

He never talked to her of his wife; he had long since given Julia up for dead; he had buried the memory of her deep in his heart; and although he kept it green, he would not resurrect it on occasion and make it a subject of chance conversation. Nor, on her part, did she ever mention this woman whom she embodied so vaguely in her imagination. She let the thought of her gnaw and tear her bosom; but when she was bitterest and sorest, like the little mermaid in the fairy story, she smiled more brightly at her lord and master. No idle words those, he was her master. He was so strong, so handsome, so brave, so wise, so noble, and so true; at least she thought him all these things, and most of them he was. And he was so kind to her, albeit he persisted in treating her habitually with the condescension one naturally uses toward a child, a condescension which made her furious.

She had learned of him more than is to be

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

acquired from books or by word of mouth. If in one month she had learned more of herself, of her womanhood, of its possibilities, than had ever been brought to her consciousness in all the preceding periods of her life, how much had she acquired in many months?

She was as light on her feet as a summer breeze, as swift as a swallow, as elusive as the perfume of a flower. Oftentimes she watched him from some covert hiding-place when he least imagined it. She followed him unnoticed, and hid near him when he fancied himself alone. Sometimes when he paced the sand in agony, his hands stretched out alike in vain appeal toward sea and sky and sand, her heart yearned over him.

At his word she would have been all things to him. She was his: he had but to take her, even to indicate his wish, and she would not wait to be taken. With the delicate passion and abandonment of France, to which was added all the fierce fervor begot of the tropic suns, she loved him. Without knowing by name what jealousy was, she tried to make him jealous. She gave and she withheld, she offered and she withdrew. Every instinct of art begot by thousands of gen-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

erations of helplessness and subordination, of which she was the child; every tender appeal of old inheritance in the propitiatory art of pleasing men, she proffered him.

He must have succumbed to her wooing a thousand times, had he not been panoplied, armored in proof, by his devotion to another woman, or to her living memory.

Alas, that there should always be some weak joint in the most approved harness, and that persistence will eventually find it, and through it effect an entrance for inimic steel!

So the two blundered along for three years. Matters were in solution, however, and the solution was so complete that only a precipitant was needed to effect the chemical and spiritual change which would bring hidden things to light.

The daily routine of the two had settled into something like order. In the morning, by a treacherous and dangerous path along the cliff face, she came down to the strand and joined him, fresh from his bath and ready to welcome her. They spent the long morning together, one day just like another. He insisted upon periods of isolation and separation in the afternoon.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Later they met again and lingered together, until nightfall sent her to the grotto, to which he in turn came in the mornings of the rainy season, for it was dry there and comfortably sheltered and protected.

One day, one week, one year, several years, passed in unvarying sameness. Nothing material had ever happened in all that time, no sail had ever whitened the horizon. Nothing could describe the absolute isolation of the pair. They were completely shut off from man. The first vague hope which Captain Stephen Cleveland had nourished for some kind of rescue, whence and by what means he could not tell, had long since faded away. He was doomed, he felt at last, to live there with this woman until he died. Sometimes of late certain obtruding consciousnesses had come to him, which shaped themselves to fit two words of interrogation —

“Why not?”

These words were reckless, begot of despair, not disloyalty or indifference; and like the good man that he was, he fought them down, refused them lodgment, dispossessed his heart of them so far as he could.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

How long he could have done so, and whether he would have wished to do so always, is a purely academic question into which we need not go, for something happened at last which brought affairs to a crisis. Whether it happened altogether by chance, or whether humanity aided design, it never entered Captain Stephen Cleveland's mind to inquire; but it very gravely enters mine!

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE CASTAWAY WAS THREATENED WITH A GREAT LOSS

LATE one morning Captain Stephen Cleveland waited in vain on the strand for his daily visitor. He had never been obliged to wait for her before, and waiting was not good for him. Imperious by nature and by his trade of shipmaster, he was not a good waiter. The past three years had made him worse. He could not understand why she did not come. What could be the matter? He had never been compelled to seek her before; he had never had to call her to himself; she had been as inseparably by him, so long as he would allow her, as his shadow in the sunshine.

He walked restlessly up and down the strand as if it had been the quarter-deck of his ship, his impatience growing, a strange feeling of anxiety and pain mingling with disappointment and a certain resentment at her absence. Could

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

anything have happened to her? She was accustomed to run recklessly upon the edge of the cliff in spite of his remonstrances. Perhaps—he stopped suddenly and called her name again and again, and unavailingly always. What could be the matter?

At last he determined to seek her. He did not try the dangerous path up the cliff, but ran around the longer way. The nearer he approached the plateau the faster he ran, and at last he turned breathlessly along the edge and stood in the grotto entrance. The cave was empty. She was not there! The bed that he had made for her, retaining the leaves and preventing them from scattering, by pieces of wood which he had dragged there, had been occupied during the night evidently, but she was not there.

There were thousands of temporary places of concealment on that island; she might be in any of these. In some sportive fancy she might have hid from him, yet he did not think so. He went back into the open and called her name again and again, as before. And as before, there was no answer. He was now overwhelmed with

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

anxiety. Could she have fallen over the cliff? The thought gave him the keenest pain.

Her presence had been a problem to him; but the life they had lived, which he had planned and which he had rigorously carried out and had forced her to acquiesce in, had seemed to postpone indefinitely the solution of that problem. Now it was thrust upon him. What could he do without her? Insufferable as this island was even with her, what would it be if she were dead? It was a strange, unusual commixture of emotions that invaded his bosom. He did not love his wife the less, but — He would speculate no longer that way; there madness lay.

He leaned far over the cliff. He stared into the void beneath. He called her name, his voice being lost in the roar of the breakers upon the reefs, far down, which there ran within a stone's throw of the cliff's foot. He could see no sign of her in the clear waters below. With a certain great relief at the negation of this possibility, he turned landward again. He stared down toward his hut under the palms, hoping she might by happy chance be there, but all was still and silent. No graceful figure flitted fairylike be-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

neath the trees. No Ariel of the Island, flower-crowned, leaf-shrouded, tripped lightly on the sands.

He was completely at a loss what to do, and finally determined to go as he had done on that long-past day so many years before, to the foot of the island and search it thoroughly from end to end, as he had done when first he realized her presence there. He was convinced now that something serious had occurred. This was no frolic. His heart was like lead in his breast. If he lost her — ah, God!

The quickest way to descend to the beach was down the cliff. Difficult and dangerous was the path, especially to him, who was neither so light nor so sure of foot as she, sailor though he was. Accordingly down it he went, progressing recklessly over its steep, more rapidly than ever before. He proceeded hurriedly with an entire disregard of the dangers. He flung himself from ledge to ledge, and dropped from place to place, with as much lightness and grace as she on going to meet him. Rounding an abrupt turn in the path he suddenly came upon her. She was lying stretched out in a little crevice of the cliff,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

which kept her from falling farther. She was greatly frightened, but her reassurance when she saw him was amazing; she stretched out one trembling arm to him, exclaiming,

“Oh, I thought you would never come.”

Let it be noted that by this time she spoke English, with an accent singularly like his own. For, among the various occupations of the past three years, he had taught her his own tongue. His French was not perfect, and it would be more convenient for them to converse in English. Submissively she had acquiesced in this decision.

“I am so glad you are here,” she continued.

Perhaps another woman in like circumstances would have phrased it this way, “Thank God, you have come”; but while there was a deep religious vein in Captain Stephen Cleveland, like most men he was shy and timid in expressing it. He had not had much experience in the discussion of such matters, and although he had made a number of endeavors to talk seriously with her, he had not been very successful. She was not instinctively religious, it appeared—even some women are not!—and God was a very

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

vague abstraction to this little semi-pagan of the island. She was a materialist, an opportunist, who lived entirely in the present, and whose motto was, "Give us this day our daily bread." For other petitions she had little use.

Stop! Such prayers as she could make or did make were that, in addition to daily bread, she might have Captain Stephen Cleveland for her own, or that he might have her, which was quite the same thing, she thought, in her innocence. Therefore she did not thank God for his arrival, she only thanked the man.

"What," exclaimed the man breathlessly, as he steadied himself against the face of the rock and looked down at her, "what has happened to you? I have never been so frightened in my life," he went on in an almost angry reproach—manlike. "I have searched everywhere for you."

"I slipped on a rock and fell."

Just how much was accident, and how much was reckless tempting of fortune in a fit of desperate loneliness and passion, to impress him, she did not say, nor did he inquire. In her passionate waywardness she was quite capable of hurling herself from the top to the bottom of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the cliff, regardless of what might happen, if the provocation were great enough.

“Are you badly hurt?” he asked, bending over her.

“I don’t know. I think so, — I can’t walk. Look!” Slowly and painfully she thrust out one exquisite foot toward him. He examined it skilfully. Most sea captains of that day were possessed of a certain surgical knowledge of a rough and ready sort. Although his manipulations hurt her fiercely, there was a certain pleasure to be got from them. She stifled every expression of pain until he had finished.

“Felicity,” he began — he had long since discarded the “Miss,” and he had taught her to call him “Stephen,” titles and degrees had seemed so absurd on the island — “Felicity, I believe your leg is broken between the knee and ankle.”

“Is that very bad?” she asked, apprehensively.

“No, it seems to be only a simple fracture.”

“And do you know what to do with it?”

“Certainly. I will bandage your leg up in splints — pieces of wood, that is — and you will have to be very quiet for five or six weeks until the bones grow together.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“But what shall I do if I can not walk?” she asked.

“I will have to bring you things and take care of you until you can.”

She had to shut her eyes to keep out the flash of exultation at that bit of information so innocently given. For he was thinking then only of her absolute helplessness. She would have been almost willing to die to bring this present kindness to her; a broken leg, however painful, was a small price to pay for that, she thought. What she said did not in any way express her feelings.

“That will be very hard for you,” she murmured.

“Nonsense,” said the man almost roughly.

“I shall try to be as little trouble as possible,” she ran on.

“You could n’t be any trouble if you tried, my dear child,” he replied. “Now, I must get you out of this place; first, I had better try to do something with that leg.”

If he only had had a proper bandage it would have been easy, yet he was not entirely resourceless. This new Adam and Eve had made them-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

selves garments out of certain plants and leaves and long fibres which they had come upon in their journeyings about the island. They both wore long tunics which fell from shoulder to knee, admirably adapted for their purposes. He knew where he could get scores of rushes with which to plait cords; indeed, he had accumulated some lengths of rude plaited rope or cord in his hut under the palm. He was glad now that he had employed his idle moments in weaving the braid, for what emergency he knew not. And he knew where he could get certain pieces of bark, or wood, from fallen trees, which would make good enough splints. He rose from her side, where he had been kneeling, and turned away.

“I shall be back in a moment,” he said.

“Are you going to leave me here alone?” Felicity cried, half in alarm, half covetous of his presence.

“I must. If you lie quiet nothing can hurt you, and it is to get things to bind up your wound that I go,” he said.

“I am afraid to lie here,” she cried, her eyes filling with tears.

She had never spoken to him like that before.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

He stopped and looked down upon her, as she looked up appealingly at him.

“I can't help it,” he said. “Don't move. I'll hurry, — don't be afraid.”

He stooped over and laid his hand gently upon her forehead. It was the first approach to a caress he had ever given her. In the exquisite pleasure and satisfaction of it she forgot the pain and everything else. She shut her eyes that nothing external might intervene between her and her joy, and when she opened them he was gone.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH LITTLE FELICITY AT LAST REALIZES
HER FONDEST DESIRE

HOWEVER delightful her meditations— and that they were delightful at all, in view of the excruciating pain from her broken leg, is evidence of the intensity of her feeling— she was not left long alone. Bestirring himself with a speed he did not often manifest in the *dolce far niente* existence of the enchanted island, Captain Stephen Cleveland was soon back by her side again. He had brought with him some of the rude cordage he had made, with the smallest and best pieces of wood he could find for splints, together with some of the basket-woven mats out of which they made their tunics. In a broken cocoanut shell he carried a modicum of water. He lifted her head gently and allowed her to drink a little, and then with the rest he laved her swollen and fevered limb. When all his prepara-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

tions were complete he raised the broken member as tenderly as he could, and said,

“ I am afraid I am going to hurt you, Felicity, but it has to be.”

“ You could n't hurt me,” said the girl, bravely. “ I would be willing to lose that foot, or anything else, to see you bending over and caring for me this way.”

It was a personal application from which Captain Stephen Cleveland shrank, but he could think of no appropriate reproof then, nor did any suitable course of action to indicate his disapproval present itself to him at the moment. He suddenly became very business-like, arranging his rude appliances as rapidly as possible. He dexterously snapped the bones in place, in spite of the almost unbearable agony; for she was not used to illness, as women usually are, and she had never before known what it was to be hurt seriously or to suffer much bodily pain. Then he rapidly but skilfully affixed the splints, wrapped them, and tied them securely. It was a rude piece of work, but the fracture was a simple one and he had no doubt that, with proper care and watching, in a few weeks her broken

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

leg would be as sound as the other one. He had worked quickly in spite of her moaning, but he was glad at last to say to her,

“It is all over.”

“Oh, I am so glad.”

“Did it hurt awfully?”

“No, not so very much. You were so gentle with me and so kind. What should I have done without you?”

“Yes,” returned Captain Stephen Cleveland in a very matter-of-fact tone, although his emotions were after all not quite so matter-of-fact as his words, “it was a lucky thing that I was here.”

It was the first time, he might have reflected had he enjoyed leisure to consider his statement, that he had viewed his being upon the island in the light of a good fortune.

“What is to be done now?” asked the woman. “I suppose I can’t walk on that foot?”

“Certainly not; I shall have to carry you.”

“I don’t see how you can carry me down that narrow rocky way.”

“It’s got to be done; there is no alternative; you can’t stay here.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

He could not possibly carry her to the top. Fortunately the worst half of the descent had been passed before she fell.

“And I shall have to hurt you sorely again in doing it,” he continued.

“What must be, must be,” she replied, unconsciously making a wider application of the ancient fatalistic creed than was involved in a passage down a cliff to a haven upon a shining strand.

“Here goes, then,” said Captain Stephen Cleveland, stooping down and lifting her easily in his strong arms.

He endeavored to support the dangling limb as much as possible, but his success was not great. Again she bore the torture with the resolution of a hero. The fact that he carried her, that her head lay upon his shoulder, that his arms were around her, that she could feel his heart beat against her own, in view of all the long years of waiting, intoxicated her with a kind of delirium, a madness which made her almost forget the pain. He held her close — he had to.

How he got down to the strand, he never knew. The strain, not only of her weight, although she

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

was but a slight thing, but also of the dangers of the steep trail, almost unnerved him. Although he was powerful beyond the ordinary vigorous man, he was trembling in every joint, every muscle ached, the sweat poured from his face, when he stopped at last on the strand, his task accomplished.

“ Shall I put you down to rest? ” he asked, “ or — ”

“ Don't ever put me down, ” whispered the woman faintly, and then — “ If I have to be carried farther, let it be now, ” she added.

“ Very well, ” he assented.

He started forward rapidly, holding her close until he reached the little hut under the palm.

In the rainy season it was wattled closely down to the ground, but that unpleasant period in the year had not yet arrived. The hut now was simply a roof, broad and low and wide extending, open on all sides for the play of any breeze. Upon his own bed of leaves and fern he laid her, and although there was relief in it from the pain, she regretted in her soul that her cheek touched the leaves of fragrant fern and grass rather than his shoulder.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

She had her eyes closed; he thought she had fainted. Immediately he stooped over her, and her hand, reaching out, caught his. She looked so pale, so small, so fair, so dependent upon him; she was so helpless, that his heart went out to her. His breath came a little quicker, the color flamed into his cheek, denoting something of what he had fought down. Unbidden thoughts rose in his soul. He looked again. Two great tears trembled beneath her long lashes.

“Oh,” she murmured pathetically, “it hurts me so; you won’t leave me again alone, as before?”

“No,” said the man thickly.

Her hand-clasp tightened; she drew him toward her. Scarcely knowing what he did, or how he did it, he slipped his arm under her head and lifted it up a little, and then —

How or why neither could ever say, their lips met; the fire and passion and sweet desire, the outgush of absolute devotion that trembled on her own lips, awakened some kind of a response on his.

“Poor little Felicity,” he murmured, drawing her head to his breast.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

His arm stole around her, she released his hand, a softer arm than his slipped around his neck. In spite of himself they kissed again and again. She smiled up at him through her tears, content at last.

“Don’t call me poor,” she whispered after a while, in sweet abandonment. “I never knew the meaning of my name before. I am so happy. I love you so much, I have loved you so long, ever since I found you in the night on the island; but you never cared. All that I have, all that I have learned from you, all that you made me, all that you wanted me to be, all that I am, are for you. I’ve lived for your love until this hour. You were always kind to me, but nothing else. I don’t know how other women love; I am here alone on this island; I have nobody to teach me, nobody to tell me; but here” — she laid her hand on her heart beneath her breast, small like a child’s and as pure and innocent, — “I have felt things. We are alone together, no one has ever come here, no one ever will come. I have wondered if I was to live here forever and never know what love is, never to have you kiss me as you did just now, never to feel your heart against my own;

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

but now it is all changed. I am so happy. You do love me, don't you? You do care?"

God forgive him, what else could he say under such circumstances? Could he decry and deny that appeal? This woman was absolutely alone on this island, but for him. No man had ever come into her life; perhaps no man ever would come except Captain Stephen Cleveland.

She was made for love, she had a woman's passionate craving for sweet observances and tender care, she was made to be admired and adored. Fate had put him by her side. Should he not take what the gods provided, and give, too, even though in his secret heart he could not return in full measure the perfect devotion with which she overwhelmed him?

Carpe diem! Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die! Why could he not, why should he not, respond to her appeal?

As he held her close, looking into her eyes so softly blue, there arose the picture of another woman, a woman who had always been held in his heart, and who would always hold the first place there. But she was dead. The years had come and gone, bringing no message to him from

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

out the vasty deep, to bid him hope. She was gone. He could, he would, have been faithful forever to her memory under other circumstances, but no man was ever placed in circumstances like this. He owed this woman something. Her life was incomplete. She could never enjoy the happiness of wedded life and love, she could never fulfil the destiny of life and love, unless—

Indeed, since he had surprised her into this frank avowal of her affections, life on any other terms than those inevitable, which she proposed so naively, so innocently, but so boldly and certainly, would be impossible for those two. There would be no priest to bless the union, but perhaps God might approve the sacrifice that he would make. And it was not such a sacrifice either; most men would not have considered it as such. In the world men would have gone mad for a woman like Felicity. The glory of her heart, the crown of her love, would be worth any struggle. For kisses from her lips, men would pay any price.

There was a singular sense of justice in Captain Stephen Cleveland. He recognized that in taking her as now he must, evidently he would

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

be receiving much more than he gave. But she need never, could never, know it. There was a sort of uneasy feeling, besides, that perhaps, in time, his possession of this sweet and gracious spirit of the wooded hill and the fresh air and the bright wave might cause him to grow contented and forget — Ah, no, that could not, must not be.

It was hard to think connectedly in that delirious moment, for the rapturous girl, forgetful of everything else, in her new contentment, drew him closer to her and kissed him passionately. The clouds had begun to gather on his brow, but Captain Stephen Cleveland threw to the wind everything. He did not deny the sweetness of her lips. The woman tempted him? Ay, so it always has been, even in Eden.

When Felicity's broken leg recovered, she went no more at night, "like the quarry slave scourged to his dungeon," to that lonely grotto on the high hill. Serenely she slept sweet in the thatched hut under the palms near the strand, with her head on his arm, ignorant quite of the long hours he lay motionless staring up into the blackness, wide awake. He thought of another

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

head that had lain on his arm, — he could not help it. Happiness filled the woman's heart, while the man fought with more or less success to keep back, to fend off, to crush down, recollections.

In idle, happy days of sweet delusion, the slings and arrows of outraged conscience fell back blunted and aimless from the shield of possession. One touch of a woman's lips, and she had mastered him. Once he had returned her caress, he fell.

Oh, Judas, betrayest thou still with kisses?

CHAPTER XIV

SHOWING TIES THAT BOUND, NOT SEEN FROM
GOLDEN GATE OR ENCHANTED ISLAND

A YEAR in the sight of Him to whom a thousand are but as a watch in the night is a small thing; yet to two on an island it may be almost an eternity. Having once given way to the temptation — and it is a wonder that Captain Stephen Cleveland had not fallen sooner — there was no longer any use in resistance. And yet in sober moments he fairly loathed himself, feeling himself false to Julia, to Felicity, to honor, to manhood, and to his own keen sense of self-reproach.

Yet Felicity was so sweet, so winsome; her devotion was so whole-souled, so absolute; her naive joy was so all-pervading, that Captain Stephen Cleveland persuaded himself sometimes that he really loved her, and seemed for the moment happy. There were clouds upon the horizon of his happiness, to be sure. His passion for

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

her, if his feelings might be so called, was, alas, of the earth earthy, not high, not uplifting. He thought of other love, of nobler, sweeter, truer womanhood; and with these thoughts came smittings of shame.

At such times he would fain break away as of old and be alone. Felicity was terribly exigent, and grew more exacting in her demands upon him with every passing hour. She could not bear him a moment out of her sight. The yoke was sometimes galling. Although he was ordinarily an even-tempered man, once in a while he could not quite stand it. At such times he spoke to her roughly, even throwing her aside, rushing away from her madly. When he came back to her, as he always did after a while, the sight of her pale, agonized face filled him with remorse, which gave a somewhat fictitious value to his usually rather careless caresses.

Poor little Felicity had no standards of comparison save what she herself furnished, and in the conditions existing on the island such standards were scarcely adequate for right measurement, or she would have found something lacking in his devotion. She knew, of course, that

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

hers was the greater love; but that seemed to her inevitable and to be expected. In the main, therefore, she was radiantly happy. Yet when her lord was wroth at her, his anger, or his indifference, or his preoccupation, wrought madness in her brain.

Little by little she had gleaned from him the story of his wife, the outlines of it anyway, and she had wit enough, womanly instinct enough, to fathom some of the details at least. What she had learned and what she imagined, frightened her. She had all the natural jealousy of a French woman, intensified by the position in which she found herself. Did his mind wander, did his eyes stray, there quickened in her breast suspicion that he was forgetting her for the moment and recalling the other woman. She did not often voice these suspicions, in fact after one or two hesitating efforts she never referred to them, but they were latent always, and could be easily awakened.

What she might do under a really jealous provocation could only be surmised. Within her lay depths which he had never sounded, passions which he did not quite apprehend. He never

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

could sound those depths or apprehend those passions in her, because he did not love enough. These secrets yield to nothing less than the absolute. Only love can understand love, only passion can fathom passion.

Her only means of retaining him, of dispelling his gloom, and of obliterating the thoughts that came unbidden — to which she was not privy and of which she was not the burden — was to redouble her efforts to please, to disclose to him more plainly, more unreservedly, the secrets of her heart, to conceive new allurements, to submit herself more absolutely to his will and pleasure. Alas, poor Felicity! Sometimes he trembled on the awful verge of satiety in her overwhelming affection, sometimes he almost grew tired of her presence.

Yet, he was generally very tender and sweet to her. Sometimes he threw aside repentance, and they wandered hand in hand like two children over hill and valley, playing with life, playing with happiness. He knew that the structure they were erecting in this idyllic Eden was like the famous house that was builded on the sand, the sand of a wrong relationship, the sand of a

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

one-sided affection, the sand of a violation, however it might be excusable, of a moral law, not the less actual because he alone perceived it. What would happen when the rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon the house? And he hated himself sometimes the more for his dreams and for his words.

Daily the two sat on the high cliff and watched the seas, he with emotions and desires, hopeful yet apprehensive, she with personal indifference, simply because he wished it.

After all his circumspection, he had in the end recklessly plunged into this affair—was it only an affair with him?—because he saw no future but the island and the woman. Suppose that he had seen wrongly, and that the world should once more seek them and offer them means of return to it, what then?

The world forgetting, as by the world forgot, was her motto, could she have phrased it. *Carpe diem*—enjoy the day—that was all. It was enough for her, not enough for him.

Of late for some months strange feelings, begot of unwonted conditions, yearnings eternal as

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

womanhood, unexplainable emotions, had come upon her. He had told her something of what was toward, but it is not in the bounds of mere man to enlighten a woman's heart upon those matters. Instinct revealed more to her, but it was not until after one certain day of exquisite pain that a thin shrill voice from a little figure lying by her side, brought consciousness to her of the mystery of life from life. Then at last she understood. The crisis in the life of poor little Felicity, in the life of every woman, was reached: she became a mother.

It is not within the power of this poor author to describe what she felt when the small lips tugged away manfully at her full breast. Certainly she believed exultantly the tie that binds was woven between Captain Stephen Cleveland and herself now. After the pain and peril of child-birth this thought, added to the new-born joys of motherhood, gave her infinite confidence and compensation. Whatever the other woman had been to him, Felicity had overpassed her in this, she decided.

What were Captain Stephen Cleveland's thoughts as he looked down at the baby that his

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

own hands placed upon her arm? He himself had delivered his own son. He had been in fearful apprehension lest he should make some mistake, but nature and perfect health and absolute simplicity of living had brought about a safe deliverance, which, I am persuaded, in spite of the curse of Eden, was in the intention of the Divine.

And Felicity had been to him only a toy, a plaything, the solace of idle hours, the resort of a soul which had little else before it. Now it was all different. Although she had reached a woman's years, she had been a child until the quickening moment; and now she was a mother, the mother of his child!

Good God! he thought, what did that mean? The tie before had been vague, indefinite, it might perchance be broken; but now he was bound to her forever. No link of steel could be more rigid and more constraining. For his honor, her helplessness, his acquiescence in her passion, had forged the shackles.

Suppose by any chance Julia Cleveland had been saved and was alive now! It was unthinkable. Now he prayed it might not be, or if she

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

had been saved and was alive, that she would never know. It was the first time such a prayer had ever arisen in his heart. He looked down into the face of the woman who had borne his son and thought—God forgive him!—at that very moment when her whole soul was going out to him, that he still loved another woman! Yet, he was so far true, he so far accepted the situation, as now to hope that if the other woman lived, she might never know. He resolved that if by chance they were rescued, he would never tell his story. He and his wife were severed forever. Baby hands pushed away her image, and Felicity, little Felicity, must take her place.

Her hand was stretched to him as he sat by her side.

“You look sad,” came from Felicity in a faint voice. “Aren’t you pleased with me?”

“Very pleased,” answered Captain Stephen Cleveland smiling, forcing himself to do it.

“And aren’t you proud of your little son?”

“Very proud.”

“Are you,” she hesitated—had she not been so weak, perhaps she would not have said it, but it came—“are you thinking about that other”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

— again she hesitated — “ woman? ” she added at last.

“ No, ” said Captain Stephen Cleveland, lying bravely and like a gentleman; and Felicity half guessed he was lying, but was glad of the affection that would fain spare her.

“ If you were thinking of any one but of me at this hour, I should die, ” she went on piteously.

“ And leave your little son? ”

“ He does not need me any more than I need you. ”

“ In your need I am here, as in his need you are here. ”

“ And do you love me very much? ”

“ Yes, ” said Captain Stephen Cleveland, and this time truthfully enough — for the time being, anyway.

Indeed, who could help it? She was so sweet, so tender, so delicately beautiful, and there was so much appeal in the little head pillowed on her round young arm, held close to her full sweet young breast.

“ More than anything in the world? ” she pleaded, instinctively realizing that as never

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

before, this was her hour, and she would better make the most of it.

“Now, you know,” came the ready answer, and he was glad of the opportunity for turning her thoughts, “I have got to divide my affections between you and” — he stopped suddenly, and she looked at him with such breathless terror that he hurried on — “between you and our little son.”

Oh, the relief of that conclusion to her! It was like the cessation of those labor pains of a few hours before. Yet she was jealous even of her own child.

“If I thought you loved him more than you do me, I could wish that he had never come,” she responded passionately.

Poor little Felicity!

When she slept that night he went out alone under the stars, and the pains through which she had gone were no keener and sharper than those tearing his soul; yet for him there was no deliverance.

Is the reader impatient with Captain Stephen Cleveland? Could a man love little Felicity

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

upon an island and yet be true in heart and soul to a woman far away? Perhaps only to the remembrance of a woman who once had been? I cannot tell, I have never been in that position, and yet I think it possible.

What was to be the outcome? It was presently to be determined, for at that hour there was sailing from the Golden Gate a ship. Upon its quarter-deck stood a woman — she owned the ship. By her side was the old boatswain, his fingers itching for a silver pipe — a “bo’s’n’s call” — he was so eager to be at work; yet he was only a passenger, he lived aft, berthed in the cabin, and was her friend.

A carefully selected crew, a band of officers devoted to her service, manned and sailed the ship. She had cleared for the South Seas on a trading cruise and those signing her articles realized that it might be years before they returned to San Francisco. She was bound on far voyages, into unknown waters, to search unknown islands.

And old Captain Crowninshield was in command. The woman had riches untold. She had written to him since she discovered that she could

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

carry out her plan, and by happy chance her letter found him disengaged at home in New Bedford, and he had come out willingly and gladly to assist her. His great experience was of vast service to her. Although she was feverishly in a hurry, he had taken his time, and the result was that the ship in its equipment and personnel was unsurpassed. She was crammed to the hatches with provisions and trading supplies, but the chief element of her cargo was hope.

The woman stood aft on the quarter-deck, but she did not look astern at the fast receding shore; her gaze was thrown ahead through the Golden Gate, out over that long stretch of unfrequented seas, in which she prayed she might find him whom she loved.

Many eyes watched the full crew swiftly cover the broad yards crossing the lofty spars with new and snowy canvas. The faint echo of cheering with which she was wafted on her voyage soon died away, as the ship swept rapidly onward.

The interested spectators presently set about their several tasks, or relapsed into idleness. Swiftly the ship made her way across the beautiful bay and out through the Golden Gate. Upon

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

one of the headlands a man stood staring, his eyes upon the ship. He had placed at her disposal one-third, to himself one-third, and to the old boatswain one-third, of the mine, the great Cleveland-Ellison Mine, for so they had called it.

He had not sought her out, or spoken to her, during the long year that had elapsed since he had seen her go down the mountain toward the sunset, leaving him alone. He did not seek to speak to her now. He was entirely aware of all that she had done and of all that she had hoped; yet he could not trust himself to see her, for he still loved her with a great passion. So he stood alone on one of the great lintels of that mighty door and watched the ship go out to sea. Ah, with how many heart-breaks have men and women stood upon deserted shores and watched ships go out to sea!

She did not look in his direction; no unconscious sense of his presence turned her eyes away for one moment from that goal upon which they were fixed. He stared while the ship grew less and less, hull down upon the horizon, her topsails sinking beneath the waves. He stared after her until night came and the stars looked pityingly

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

down upon his voiceless agony. So the unconscious woman left unhappiness behind and, if she but knew it, went to meet unhappiness before.

Let her enjoy her hour while she may; never, perhaps, shall such another come to her, however long she may live, and whatever life may hold.

CHAPTER XV

HOW THE WORLD AT LAST CAME, AND WHAT IT
OFFERED TO THOSE BY WHOM AND TO
WHOM IT CAME

SOMEHOW or other, the baby made a difference. Babies always make a difference, perhaps, but in this instance the change was very marked. For one thing, try as he might, Captain Stephen Cleveland could not disguise from Felicity — I had almost said his wife, reflecting what was sometimes his own thought when he was caught napping — that he cared more for young Stephen, for so he called him, than for his mother; and this thought filled her with exquisite anguish. Words are lacking to describe the passion with which the man had inspired her. By an unfortunate change entirely understandable, the more irrevocably the man became committed to the present woman, the more persistently the absent woman recurred to his thoughts. The stronger the ties that bound

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

him to Felicity on that island, the more consuming became his longing to get away — from it? — from her?

The irrevocable, the irremediable, the unchangeable, is of all burdens the hardest to be borne. While he only played with life and love and Felicity, the situation was not so tremendous; but when it became so intensely intricate and personal and he could see its seriousness every time he looked at the baby boy, affairs took upon themselves another complexion. In a way he loved the woman; she satisfied at least one part of his nature, but in other ways not so. He had experience of higher companionship to look back upon, remembrances of a nobler union, the possession of a greater personality had been his. To that side of his life little Felicity ministered not at all.

She had nothing to offer him but her love. The experience of centuries might have told this child of nature, had she possessed ability to read it or understand it, that love alone was not enough.

Naturally Captain Stephen Cleveland was devoted to his bright, healthy, sunny youngster;

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

but even he sometimes pointed a moral, adorned a tale, that was hard for Captain Stephen Cleveland to hear. He was the unplaced factor that disturbed the equation, he was the irremediable condition.

Felicity would watch him playing with the child, and suddenly she would see the cloud come over his face. He would place the boy in her arms and turn away, and she would have to fight hard against the inclination to thrust the child away from her and follow him.

Since they had entered into these closer and dearer relations, she had understood what she had never comprehended before, what the other woman had been to him. This developed a certain unwonted melancholy in her soul. Sometimes she thought her heart would break, sometimes she was afraid. Often when he left her, she would walk upon the strand and look to the sea. Sometimes she climbed up to where she had stood the first time that he saw her—the dizzy verge of the cliff—and stared down on the mighty pulsations of the ocean beneath her, the baby clasped in her arms.

Then with growing frequency she wondered if

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

it would not be better, after all, to—but that would leave him alone! Felicity had begun to understand just how much and how little the man she worshipped loved her. She was more or less necessary to him there and now. She was in some ways indispensable. She could not leave him alone, yet there was a certain fierce joy to think how he would miss her if she were absent. He would know what she had become to him; he would understand and fathom then, if not before, the love that he had lost. And Felicity would almost have died for that, but that she would not be there to see. And but that she had only the vaguest ideas of existence elsewhere, whence she might perhaps look down upon him, she might have done it in some moment of miserable jealousy and dissatisfaction.

As she lived with him she forgot everything else; her world was on the island, nay, her world was within the circle of his arms, even the boy occupying a secondary place in her heart. The world for him was by no means within her arms; it was very far away, yet not so far but that he could hear its call. It grew to him louder and more insistent.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

For a time he had been in a measure contented, he was so no more. That was why he sat for hours with the boy between his knees on the cliff-head, little Felicity lying upon the grass at his side, her hand touching him tenderly now and again. At such times he little noted the woman. She looked at him, he at the sea; that was the pity of it. Their desires no more paralleled than did their glances.

Felicity often wondered what they would do if a ship should come. It would take them away, of course; the man, the woman, and the boy would leave the little island and go out into the world of which Felicity could remember little or nothing. What she could recall filled her with forebodings. They would abandon that island; and if the story of Eden had recurred to Felicity, it is certain she would have declared that her emotions and her thoughts were not to be surpassed even by those of the first woman at the sight of the Angel of the Flaming Sword.

So far as she ever did pray, this poor child of nature prayed that no ship might come. Yet, as she had evidence of the growing longing of her lord, of his increasing impatience, of his inten-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

sifying disappointment, she accused herself of disloyalty, treachery, in that her thoughts were not as his.

There is an element of selfishness in most passions, and it was not absent from Felicity's heart, but there were capabilities latent in it of a self-abnegation which would be absolute. At some moments the girl would have sacrificed her soul for him without a thought of consequence, without a moment of hesitation.

After her reference in that birth hour, she had only once mentioned the other woman, whose name she did not even know. She tried to introduce the topic once, but Captain Stephen Cleveland thrust the boy he had been holding into her arms, and harshly forbade her to refer to the subject again, if she valued her peace and happiness, and then broke away. And Felicity, appalled, obeyed him. Indeed, she knew no will but his, but she had not forgotten.

Picture them there one morning upon the high headland where the trees grew nearest to it, the baby, a year old, playing at their feet. They sat side by side, and his arm held her close to him; with the other hand he played with her long

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

slender fingers, he even bent to kiss them, he laughed at some of her playful fancies. Some good angel possessed him for the moment. Felicity was perfectly happy. The moment passed, he lifted his eyes and glanced idly down the hill across the strand. There suddenly shot into the compass of his vision the white sails of a great ship!

She had come up from the other side; they had not thought to look that way, expecting nothing. They had had no warning, and here she was rounding the point of the island, luffing to the wind, for a beat along the reef toward the entrance. It was easy to be seen from the decks, for the sea ran blue and smooth there between lines of white-topped breakers on either hand.

For a moment Captain Stephen Cleveland looked amazed, and then he sprang to his feet with such furious haste that the woman was thrown carelessly aside. He stood staring.

“Great God!” he exclaimed. “It is a ship, at last.”

He forgot everything in his mad excitement. His heart throbbed, his pulses beat, his blood raced through his veins, he turned away; another

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

second, and he would have been gone. Felicity threw herself toward him and caught him securely by the ankle, as he had caught her by the ankle, how many years before!

“Wait!” she cried, imploringly.

“I can’t wait! Don’t you see it’s a ship? It might pass by.”

“Don’t signal her!” cried the woman. “They will separate us, — they will take you away.”

“I won’t go without you,” answered the man. “I will take you along, — we will go back to the world.”

“Where the other woman is!” cried Felicity anguishedly. “I would rather stay here alone with you.”

“Nonsense,” said the man, roughly. “I am bound to you forever,” he added, without realizing exactly what he was saying; “and if they take me, they must take you and—”

“But the other woman?”

“There is no other woman. You must let me go. Take the child and follow after,” he cried, wrenching himself free.

He was mad with excitement. He turned without another word or glance and plunged

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

over the cliff, and by the most dangerous way descended rapidly toward the strand.

Felicity threw herself down, buried her face in her hands and sobbed. Anxiety was followed by a premonition of danger she could not explain. It was the baby crawling near her, a tiny chubby hand upon her cheek, that recalled her to her senses. How long she had lain there she did not know — a few moments, perhaps — but measured in suffering, a lifetime. She saw it all now. This was the beginning of the end. How tenuous, after all, was the tie that bound! Was there any real tie in strands that were not interwoven with cords of love? Felicity knew little of honor and of its so-called bindings, indeed!

She raised her head at last, drew the baby into her arms, and looked down toward the ship. It was a heavenly morning, the breeze falling. The sails of the ship had been so placed that she was at rest opposite the opening in the barrier reef. Felicity saw Captain Stephen Cleveland standing upon the strand where he had once come ashore, a poor battered thing, crawling out of the water, while she unseen had watched him, wondering

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

what the broken man cast up by the sea might mean to her.

Now he was waving frantically the bough of a tree which he had torn from its stem as he ran. Felicity divined that he had been seen, that the world was knocking at her door and would soon effect an entrance. She must be there, too. How had she allowed Captain Stephen Cleveland to escape from her? She must be by his side when that happened. She could not trust him for a moment alone with that fearful world.

With frantic terror she lifted the baby to her shoulder and started down the longer way through the trees. She was trembling so that she could not have ventured, even had she been alone, the steep descent of the cliff. As she left the plateau, she saw a small boat drop from the side of the ship and make its way to the shore. She must hurry if she would be in time.

What of Captain Stephen Cleveland on the strand? Who shall describe his emotions? They were very simple for the moment: the unexpected, the improbable, had at last happened. Here were men who would take him from this ghastly island with his two companions, baby and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

woman; who would restore him to his kind, enable him to do a man's work, to live again. That was all, that was enough.

He was so excited, and the distance was so great, that he did not notice that the last person who descended the ship's side into the small boat was a woman. He threw aside his verdant signal—it had served its purpose—and stood, with clasped hands and heaving breast and staring eyes, at the very water's edge. The trees ran close to the shore at the upper end of the strand opposite the opening through the barrier, and there was a thick little undergrowth back of where he was, a fine place in which to lie hid and watch and listen.

As the boat's keel grated along the sand, Felicity reached the shore. Coming down, she had caught a glimpse of the boat, and it seemed to her that one of those who sat in the after part was a woman. There was only one other woman in the world for little Felicity; she leaped to the conclusion that this was she. Therefore she stopped and lay hidden in the coppice a few yards back of Captain Stephen Cleveland. She would wait before she disclosed herself. She

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

would see who this was and what would happen. She quieted the baby by giving him the breast — oh, what milk his tiny lips drew from it then! — and with every nerve tense, with her heart choking, dying, she watched the boat touch the strand and swing broadside to the shore.

An old man clambered out. With a sudden awful sense of shock Captain Stephen Cleveland recognized him. It was Foresman, the boatswain, to whom had been committed the charge of the woman he had loved and lost. And there by his side — God! could it be? — she stood, the sunlight on her bright hair, her blue eyes shining, her hands outstretched. Poised on the gunwale for a moment, like a bird she leaped upon the strand and ran toward the man, who was standing petrified, rooted to the spot, incapable of motion.

“Stephen!” she cried, “Stephen Cleveland!” — the old familiar words. “Thank God, I have found —”

“Julia,” said the man, hoarsely. “My wife! Great God, my wife!”

He fell to his knees at her feet, her arms went around his shoulders, she bent low over him.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Old Foresman showed himself the gentleman then; he clambered back into the boat quickly.

“Lads,” he cried, “let’s row up the lagoon a bit, eyes seaward.”

And the men obeyed. There were to be no further witnesses, if they could help it, to this joyous meeting on the strand.

The wretched husband, with buried head, crushed with thoughts tumultuous, terrible, which he could not control, knelt before the wife, the brave and splendid woman who had been so faithful to him, who had dreamed of him and at last had come to seek him, bringing deliverance in her hands. This was the woman he loved, whom he had so frightfully wronged.

Ah, Captain Stephen Cleveland, was this the only woman you had wronged?

The boat had rounded a little curve and was out of view, but there was another watcher of that meeting; another woman saw the light in Julia Cleveland’s eyes, and divined what it meant. As in a flash the situation was revealed to her—this woman was his wife, and he loved her!

Captain Stephen Cleveland lifted his face, and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Felicity saw that in it which she had never been able to awaken. The world had come, — the world and the one woman. She was dispossessed. There was no place for her. It was a big world, he had said; but it was not large enough for little Felicity and Captain Stephen Cleveland and that other woman.

She was a creature of mad and sudden impulse, this islander, but she seemed to realize that whatever happened, however long she might speculate, there was only one conclusion to which she could come, she and her baby boy. They were too many, there was no place for them. She did not trust herself to look longer; she gathered the boy up, stifled his cry, and slipped noiselessly away. When she got a safe distance she ran as she had never run before. So she breasted the steep of that high hill that sunny morning. Presently she burst through the trees. She would have been glad if they had screened her to the very end, but it was impossible; there was one place only where it was practicable for her to carry out her intention, and that was in the open.

For a moment she stood with her baby in her arms, silhouetted against the sky line. One

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

glance backward she could not deny herself, one faint hope trembled in her bosom, — there might be something that would give her a respite. But no, the man whom she loved was standing now, his arm about the woman, with her hand in his — the very position, save that they were standing, which he and she had occupied one short hour since.

It was all over. Little Felicity stood poised, one foot thrust backward, one projecting slightly over the dizzy edge. She stared down below at the wild sea breaking upon the rocks. What kind of a prayer came from poor little Felicity's heart to the unknown God, there upon the verge? Alas! I know not.

She loved much, perhaps that entitled her to the pity of Him who loves most of all, and she knew but little of that world in which she had no place. Perhaps in some other world they might find room for this poor untutored child of nature, if not of God, and her little laughing baby boy.

For the first time since she had come upon the shore, Captain Stephen Cleveland who had at last risen to his feet, looked away from his wife.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

By some impulse, his eyes lifted and he saw Felicity standing on the very verge, where he had seen her standing so many years before, and she saw him. As he stared, she waved a slender hand in gesture of farewell, then closer the baby she clasped to her bosom. Captain Stephen Cleveland stood speechless, his wife by his side following his gaze.

“Who is that?” she demanded with sudden harshness.

“Felicity! Great God!” cried Captain Stephen Cleveland.

There was a white flash in the sunlight, and she was gone and the baby with her.

The man and the woman upon the strand stood appalled; the man took a step forward, staggered, clasped his hands to his face, crashed down like a stricken oak. The woman stooped by his side; she did not touch him; she did not know whether he was dead or not; she did not know whether she would be glad or sorry.

“Oh,” she murmured, wringing her hands in long-drawn, exquisite moments of agony, “was it for this that I sought you and found you?”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Sic transit Felicitas!

So in the very moment of hope's fruition for these two daughters of Eve, joy passed. Of two women grinding at the mill of life, one shall be taken and another left; and which shall be counted the more miserable?

O Captain Stephen Cleveland, for how much hast thou to answer, as thou liest there mercifully unconscious, upon that shining strand?

BOOK V
HEARTS ENVENOMED

CHAPTER XVI

HOW LITTLE FELICITY WAS PERFORCE LEFT BEHIND

THEY buried little Felicity and her baby on the high plateau whence she had leaped into eternity. The sailors of the *Stephen Cleveland*, for so fond Julia had named her new ship, dug down through the shallow covering of soil to the bed rock and thereafter blasted out a deeper excavation to hold the poor remains of the sadly misnamed woman and her child.

Foresman, who was of a deeply religious nature — remember, dear reader, he was a sailor of the olden time! — read the burial service over what remained of the two. On one side of the narrow opening stood Captain Stephen Cleveland, on the other side Julia, his wife. That open grave separated them now; would it do so forever? Face to face, they were now farther apart than when the wide seas rolled between.

Captain Crowninshield, his officers, and such of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the seamen as could be spared clustered at the foot of the grave, silent yet appreciative spectators of what was happening. The tragedy was plain to the dullest. Even the most unobservant could see the problem, the answer to which not the wisest could discover.

Captain Stephen Cleveland, clothed once more in the garments of civilization, which Julia's forethought had caused to be provided for him on the chance of her finding him when she left San Francisco a year before, looked from the hard-set face of his wife into the equally set face of — how shall I describe her? Alas! now she has naught but her ill-sorted name of Felicity — and the little baby she had brought into and taken out of life, and he wondered how it would all end.

Felicity's face was not hurt (frightful bruises and breakings bodily elsewhere were mercifully shrouded from view by the clean soft white in which they had enwrapped her); it was a little smiling and very tender; it had taken no hurt from her plunge; and the little baby on her arm looked as if he might just then have fallen asleep. So Captain Stephen Cleveland had often seen

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

them in days gone by, so he was ever to remember them in days to come.

Manlike, ashamed of himself for that collapse on the sands whence he witnessed that wild plunge into the sea, he now held himself under rigid control. His soul was tempest-tossed, indeed, but he gave no outward or visible sign of his horror and dismay.

I wonder what he thought.

If you were a man looking from the dead face of the mother of your child, with that child clasped in death as in life against the tender breast that had nourished it, as you looked into the hard-set, unforgiving, yet beautiful face of the woman you passionately loved in spite of all you had done, the woman who was your true and lawful wife, what would you think in such a case? Wronging both women, but somehow more sinned against than sinning, and yet unable to offer any defence, what would your emotions be?

What memories, sweet and holy, would rise in your soul, of the farther past when first you took into your arms the noble woman now staring at you with such bitter resentment across that narrow opening which would seem forever to divide

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

you from her? What recollections, sad yet tender, would haunt your mind, of the nearer past when you took into your arms the woman who did not stare at you at all, yet whose eyes, now closed and sealed, had looked to you with love and laughter? Across all these remembrances what sound of baby's voice, not to be heard any more, would come to you at last?

What memories of the past did Captain Stephen Cleveland mingle with anticipations of the future? Had he committed the unpardonable sin? Could he ever be forgiven? How he had longed for the coming of the world to that desolate island! Now that it was here, what had it to offer him? What had he to offer it?

Yonder stood his wife beautiful; strength, nobility, and courage in every line of her figure, in every lineament of her face. Yonder, his lips slowly voicing the ancient words of prayer, was his old friend and faithful servant the boatswain, his gray head bowed, his voice choked a little, sometimes stumbling over an unfamiliar phrase. Yonder were grouped the men of his race, some of whom he knew, looking on, commenting upon the situation in their hearts; as they were hu-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

man, ready enough to put two and two together, to deduce the inevitable, holding what opinion of him we all can well imagine.

He stood there without justification before God, before man, and before the women, dead or living. His troubles had come to him, he scarcely knew how, through the dead woman, yet he could not feel hard toward poor little Felicity. Ah, Captain Stephen Cleveland, thou hast much for which to answer; but at least that sin of reproaching the helpless and innocent dead is not to be laid to thy charge. Hadst thou done that, I had left thee to thy fate alone upon that desert island, now from a paradise become a hell!

Little Felicity had greatly loved, and she had little known; that was her excuse. Her understanding was not in proportion to her passion; that was her misfortune. He had not loved her before; that made his shame and reproach the more keen—but if such things were possible, he almost loved her now. Could he love both the dead and the living? At any rate he felt very kindly indeed toward the forlorn and departed Spirit of the Island and toward the baby whom he was not to see any more.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

The position in which he was plunged was absolutely insupportable. Better had it been, he thought bitterly, if he had lived out his life on that island with her and the child. Better, after all, if no one had ever found them and that they had died there, unnoticed the world, by the world unnoticed. Aye, far better even if he had died on the burning ship, for then Felicity would be alive to-day and in Julia's sheltering arms.

Yet the experience he had gone through with her was worth something! Was it not so, Captain Stephen Cleveland?

Instead of hating Felicity's memory if he had died, Julia would have been her friend. Instead of hating him too, as she did now, Julia would have loved his memory. He stole a glance at his wife, and the volcanic rock on which they stood was not sterner and more composed than her face. It was pale, too, like the white water at the foot of the cliff, where little Felicity and her baby had gone out to sea. Her lips were compressed, her glance bent toward the wooden box in which the two were now being nailed up.

O little Felicity, never before in thy life wert thou under such constraint. How wouldst thou

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

have protested against those narrow limits, into which the most free of us must some day come!

Save for her breathing, Julia Cleveland scarcely seemed more alive than the other. Stop, there was a woman beneath that exterior of stone. As she gazed, a slow tear ran unnoticed down her cold cheek—single evidence, only testimony, of tenderness; outward and visible sign of some love and pity in her broken heart. Captain Stephen Cleveland groaned in spirit as he looked from the one to the other, but with his lips he made no sound.

What, dear reader, if you are a woman, do you think were the emotions of Julia Cleveland then and there? Never in all the long hours had doubt of him crossed her mind. Absolutely sincere in her own devotion, it had been impossible for her to conceive any less of him. She had made many pictures of the possible meeting for which she hoped, of which she dreamed, for which she had labored,—never one like this. She would have staked her soul upon his fidelity, she would have pledged her life for his trust and loyalty. She had often imagined that she might find him, but never that she would find him in

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the arms of another woman; that the child of that other woman would call him father. She, too, had borne a child to him; it, too, was dead, and he did not know. She thought of the struggles she had made alone for him. Oh, yes, she would not have been a human woman if she had not thought of Ellison and that day on the mountain-side when she turned her back upon him and went down to seek her husband.

Her heart filled with bitter resentment toward Captain Stephen Cleveland; her own devotion had been so absolute that she made no excuse for him. She was a New England woman, too, with an instinctive reprobation for broken laws and sinful acts. She had the conscience of her country and the hardness of her Puritan ancestry. She was bitter against him, and the wickedness against God and herself of which he had been so undeniably guilty.

Yet it is a singular indication of her state of mind—the humanity that veiled the tables of stone in her being—that she was not yet bitter against the poor woman; she might later become so, doubtless; that would be natural and inevitable, provided of course that all love for her

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

husband had not been crushed out of her heart in that awful revelation. At present she even thought tenderly of little Felicity. There was something so appealingly pathetic, so terribly tragic, so ineffably sad, about her position. The sight of the baby on her breast moved the other woman, stirred the very depths of her being. She thought of her own motherhood, of her own little son out there in the unknown into which Felicity and her baby had so madly plunged.

She did not know the particulars of the story, yet it was not difficult to divine them. She was burning with jealous anxiety to know everything, and she was resolved that she would know everything, that nothing should be withheld from her. She would exact the most infinitesimal details from her husband's doubtless unwilling lips, although every revelation would add to her torture and her bitterness.

But for the moment she was sorry for Felicity. Curiously enough, the fact that she too had been a mother, and the mother of this man's child, and that that child too was dead, inclined her heart to tenderness. Blest be the tie that binds! Thank God for that touch of nature that made these two

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

women kin — the strong and the weak, the erring and the inerrant. A little child indeed had led them. Blessed was the tear of the good woman over the grave of her who was, in law at least, an adulteress, a murderess, and a suicide.

How horrible is the sound of those awful words! God forgive me, little Felicity, that I should thus harshly characterize thine innocent acts. Thou wert greatly more sinned against than sinning, in this, thy short life; and I have not much fear but that Love with His sweet allowances made thee welcome on the distant farther side — and surely thy little baby too.

It was soon over, the brief service came to its appointed end, the small grave was rapidly filled, the huge mound of rocks — smaller and fewer were enough to weight down little Felicity, surely — was speedily completed. They surmounted it with a rude cross of the sailors' making. As of old, love lay beneath the sign of torment, affection was the basis on which was upreared the symbol of Self Sacrifice Divine.

They went down from the hill separately. Julia Cleveland and the old boatswain in the lead, Captain Crowninshield and the sailors next, and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Captain Stephen Cleveland alone. After they all went away and left him, he knelt down there on that heaven-kissing hill and buried his face in his hands. Neither lips nor heart could formulate a prayer, but there was something in his attitude that was more eloquent than words. I take it that God understood; and maybe Felicity too might have been a little comforted.

Then he rose and followed the others. He held his head high, determined to look the woman in the face, as became a man. Although every error, every mistake, every wrong, tortured his broken soul, still he would support with courage the marred and blurred image of his Maker which he had made of himself.

Man, proud man! And what is he, Lord, that Thou art mindful of him?

They entered the boat on the shore. There was nothing to take away, no cause for delay, so they were rowed out to the ship, and without further ceremony got aboard her. The boat was hoisted, the mainyard was swung, on the broad yardarms the white canvas was sheeted home. The great ship heeled to the gentle breeze, hands stood by the helm, words of command came

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

sharply from the quarterdeck; slowly she swung to the wind and began to beat away from the island, back to the world again.

Captain Stephen Cleveland walked the quarterdeck, falling easily into lifelong habits, as if he had never been off the ship. It was evening, the sunset and the darkness came. The Island of Enchantment faded away like a dream; the last glimpse he caught of it was a rude cross outlined against the sky upon the highest hill.

In the years to come the sun would shine upon that cross by day. The winds would blow now softly, now roughly over it. Sometimes the rain would beat upon it. By night the moon would silver it, or the silent stars look down upon it, or the thick clouds veil it; while beneath it, all that was left of little Felicity and the baby mouldered away into oblivion.

“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return!”

Perhaps, some day, wandering mariners might land upon that shore. They might stand bare-headed in reverence before that crumbling cross, emblem world-wide of all religion; they might

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

make out the rude carving of the one word it bore, "Felicity" — happiness — and wonder who lay buried there, what joy in life had caused that word to be graved above her. But she would never know. Only in the minds of two persons would her memory be preserved, and in neither of these minds would she, who had been light and love and laughter, be remembered with the feelings with which one so sweet, so joyous, so pure, so innocent, should have been associated. For one of the two by and by might hate her, and the other would rage against the recollection of hours spent in her arms.

And yet, after all, time would do something for her, perhaps, in the later years. When Julia Cleveland forgave her husband and took him back — for you know, dear reader, that is what she will do, what she must do — there would be a mellowing of feeling, and possibly some day a little Felicity might come again upon the earth. Who knows? Certainly Stephen Cleveland did not, he could see no way out of the situation, as he stood there on the quarterdeck staring at the fading blur upon the far horizon that had been his home for so many years.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

There was a certain relief in his soul. The Gordian knot had been cut. Felicity had cut it in her own way, by her own act. And this had greatly simplified his hard task. He intended to keep back nothing from his wife, without being false to Felicity's cause. He counted on the love she bore him, and he hoped to win her respect again, without which he could not enjoy her affection.

Hic labor, hic opus est! He was willing to serve for her forgiveness as many years as he had been upon the island, or longer if need be. He drew long breaths of hope, as he thought of the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation. Alas! poor man, he little knew what was in store for him, what he had to face.

Sometimes the evil that men do is not recompensed in this world. The wicked do still on occasion flourish like the green bay-tree. And sometimes they die in their wickedness unrepentant, triumphant. But the *lex talionis* is the oldest and most immutable of laws, after all. Happy the man who pays here rather than there. Was all this sorrow to go for naught? Was all this unhappiness to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

receive no attention? Was the great Avenger careless ever?

As there was a God above him, Captain Stephen Cleveland was to be made to suffer something of what others had suffered on his account. Restitution must be made. Without the shedding of blood there was to be no remission of sins. Even-handed justice would exact the uttermost from this master mariner. The Avenger of Blood, as of old, was on the track of the man for whose sake little Felicity had cast away her own life and her baby's life as well.

Aye, indeed, happier hadst thou been, Captain Stephen Cleveland, hadst thou never been aroused from that unconsciousness upon the sands. Death were a mercy to what was to be sent upon thee. And as it ever hath been, is, and shall be, thou wert thine own undoing!

Oh, little Felicity, how wouldst thy gentle heart have been wrung couldst thou have known what was preparing for thy beloved in that night, on that ship which bore his name, and which carried him away from thee. In that lonely grave thou sleepest well, and perhaps after all thou art the happiest of the three. Who knows?

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Old Foresman broke Captain Stephen Cleveland's reverie. He touched him on the shoulder; there was sympathy in the old man's regard; he too had made deductions. He knew, or thought he did, the temptations and the follies of youth, and the loneliness of the island, and his kindly feeling spoke in his voice.

"Sir," he began, — he was a very rich man now from his share of the mine, but the old habit of subordination was strong upon him. He could have bought Captain Stephen Cleveland over and over again a million times, for the latter had nothing; yet he was still the humble subordinate, still the veteran sailor.

"Sir," he said, "your wife wants you below in the cabin."

CHAPTER XVII

WHEREIN CAPTAIN STEPHEN CLEVELAND CONFESSES ALL AND SEEKS FORGIVENESS

TO pass from the darkness of the night into the brilliantly lighted, luxuriously appointed cabin under the poop-deck, which Julia Cleveland had reserved for herself and in the outfitting of which she had spared no expense, was not more abrupt transition than from the thoughts of Felicity which had run through Captain Stephen Cleveland's brain, to those evoked by the living presence of his wife, seated calmly at the head of the table in the centre of the cabin. Captain Stephen Cleveland had never posed as a connoisseur of things feminine; perhaps unconsciously he had learned something from his long association with the woman of the past — dead but a few hours, and now only of the past! But his first impression was one of keen pleasure in the beauty and splendor of the presence feminine which filled the little cabin with another

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

light than that which came from the lamps swinging overhead.

Captain Stephen Cleveland had been a commanding officer, and he loved the commanding presence. He appreciated the self-possession, the ease, the dignity, which emanated from his wife, and he was proud of their relationship, albeit what that relationship would actually turn out to be in the future, he could not yet foresee. So far as his powers of determination went, he was resolved that it should be everything that it had been on the *Swiftsure*, before fate so rudely interrupted the course of their love's young dream.

Unfortunately it is not always enough to resolve in order to achieve. It is a long lane with many turns that lies between purpose and the end. Well, life, which had been so closed to him before, was now widely opened. If it took time, he would take time; if it took effort and labor, he would bestow them cheerfully and ungrudgingly.

Protestations, prayers, vows, explanations rushed to his lips, but he stood silent, easily balancing himself to the slow roll of the ship. Oh, how good did that roll feel to him after the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

solid isolation on the island! It was like quickening the dead to him, as he waited for her to speak.

“Stephen Cleveland,” began the woman, breaking the silence with the familiar words that had been so often on her lips and always in her heart.

Ah, with what different emotions, and under what different circumstances, did she call that name now! And it was the first time that she had spoken to him since she addressed that terrified and terrifying question to him ere he fell prostrate on the sand. Foresman and Captain Crowinshield, together with her, had planned all the details of the burial, of which he had been a passive spectator, dully acquiescent in everything they proposed.

“Julia,” he began in his turn, as she stopped short, apparently unable to proceed.

The woman shook her head, frowning.

“What right have you to speak to me, to call me by my name, now?” she asked bitterly, and then added abruptly, “After what has passed, I should think—”

He interrupted her quickly.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“Unless you give it me, I have no right,” he admitted at once.

He spoke quietly, firmly, with dignity that matched her own, yet with a certain humility as unusual to him as it was most becoming. The woman could not fail to recognize that and approve. There was nothing unmanly or abasing about his attitude in this most difficult interview. He could be sorry, ashamed, repentant, as he was and as he meant her to know, without degrading himself before her. And come what might, he did not intend to degrade little Felicity either. Was ever man in a more impossible situation?

“Yes, you have no right in me, or with me at all. What I shall give you,” said the woman, passionately, “I do not know, I cannot tell; in my present state of mind, nothing.”

“It may be true, as you say, I deserve nothing at your hands; it is certain that I deserve little; and yet, perhaps, I am not altogether so guilty and so disloyal as you think me.”

“As I think you!” she cried with cutting emphasis upon the verb.

“As I seem to be, then.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“As you seem to be!”

“As I am, then,” he admitted patiently, conscious of her wrongs. “Perhaps when I tell you what happened and how it happened, you may understand a little better.”

“I do not wish any enlightenment, I can see it all—”

“No, forgive me, that is just what you can not see, and that is what I intend to show you.”

“Do you intend to shelter yourself behind the woman?” she asked, scornfully.

“God forbid!” came the prompt answer, and she did not know whether it pleased or angered her the more.

“The blame was either hers, or yours, or you were both equally guilty.”

She thus pursued the subject with a merciless and cruel logic which was torture to herself as well as to him. Her proposition was one which Captain Stephen Cleveland found difficulty in answering. He stared at his wife in dismay. She was making it very hard for him, he thought, with masculine resentment, forgetting that the difficulty was inherent in the situation and was largely his own deserving. He was a fair man

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

and a just. He was the one to be blamed, and he manfully assumed the responsibility.

“The blame was mine,” he admitted at last.

“Do you say that because she is —”

“I say it because it is true.”

“You may as well tell me how it all happened,” said the woman, exulting in his confusion.

“I am anxious to do so.”

“And you will suppress no details?”

“Not one. You shall have as frank a confession as I can make.”

“Begin at the beginning, then, when you fell back into the flaming ship. Oh,” — she put her hand to her head and closed her eyes as if to shut out recollection — “if you could know how I felt at that moment!”

“I do know, for before I fell I saw you whirled away —”

“Never mind me. Your life was spared, — how?”

“I fell into the afterhold and when the rain came it found me still alive though frightfully burned and bruised. I do not know how many days I lived on what was left of the ship with-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

out food or water in bodily torture inexpressible. Julia, believe me, I swear to God it was nothing to the mental agony I suffered because I thought you dead."

"And was it because you thought me dead that you took this woman?" she asked with contemptuous sarcasm.

"No."

"And if I had been dead, had I been so little to you that you could so easily forget me?"

"No, in God's name, no."

"How, then?"

"I will tell you if you will be still."

"Go on."

"The *Swiftsure* lodged at last on that island."

"And there you found the woman?"

"No," replied the man desperately, "but indeed I cannot tell you if you interrupt me in this way. It is hard enough, and you make it harder."

"I will be silent."

"The woman found me in the island several days after I landed. She had been cast away there as a child from a French frigate of which her father was the commander, and which was

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

lost at sea; how, I am not quite sure; probably she was dismasted, sprung a leak, foundered —”

“I am not interested in that matter,” interposed the woman.

“No, certainly not,” assented Captain Stephen Cleveland. “I judge that she was about ten years old when she landed on that island, and she was alone, all the survivors of the frigate’s crew in the boat which brought her to the island having died on the way. She had lived there alone for nine or ten years. She was as shy and timid as a wild bird. She did not make herself known to me until several days after I had come ashore. I used to find fruit piled up near where I slept and one night suddenly awakening I caught her by the ankle. She broke away. When day came I sought her until I found her on that high cliff where —”

He paused. The recollection of that last scene of aî in little Felicity’s strange, eventful history almost overcame him, and yet he could not, would not, show any emotion.

“Whence she leaped to death?” asked the woman, scrutinizing him keenly.

“Yes.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“And then what happened?”

“She had a woman’s being, a woman’s capability of development, but a child’s knowledge and a child’s training. I taught her to speak English and whatever else I could recall of the world’s knowledge or learning.”

“Is that all you taught her?”

“As God is my judge that was my sole purpose with her.”

“Your purpose and your performance did not run together, evidently.”

Julia Cleveland laughed, but her laughter was neither pleasant nor mirth-provoking.

“And you lived — how?” she asked presently.

“She lived in a little grotto on the top of that high hill; and I, in that palm-thatched hut you saw near the strand.”

“But I don’t understand,” began the woman in bewilderment. “Are you telling me the truth?”

“Did I ever in all my life tell you a lie?”

“I do not believe so.”

“I am only at the beginning of the story. Hard as it may be, you shall have it all.”

“And I want it all. Proceed.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“One day, two years or more after I came to the island — we had no calendar, you know, and I soon lost count of time — coming down the cliff she fell and broke her leg. I found her and carried her to the hut on the strand. She was helpless. I had to wait on her. She was frightened, sick; I could not leave her. We were alone, no ship had ever passed. I — we —”

He stopped abruptly. Somehow he could not put it into words, try as he might. It was not fair to Felicity, hardly decent. His face flushed, he became suddenly very still. The temptation to justify himself was overpowering, yet he thanked God that he did not yield to it.

“It was my fault,” he said very low, not hanging his head as another might have done, but looking directly at her with certain pride. “She knew nothing of life, its laws, its responsibilities, its conventions. The blame was mine.”

And in this perhaps Captain Stephen Cleveland went beyond the truth, in his desire to be honest, to be just, to be absolutely fair to poor little Felicity.

“I understand,” said Julia Cleveland, returning his concentrated gaze as if fascinated.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

She would have hated him had he sought shelter behind the woman, yet it cut her to the heart to see him assume all the responsibility, to recognize his intention to shelter the other, to whom, being herself a woman, she was fain to ascribe all the wrong. There was a long pause which neither was able to break.

“Did you, did she —” she at last hesitatingly began, forcing herself with considerable success to speak indifferently in spite of the flushes of shame and humiliation that swept over her, “did she — care very much for you?”

Captain Stephen Cleveland bowed his head.

“I was the only man upon the island,” he answered. “She could remember no other. I was the only human being she had seen since her girlhood. I had been good to her. I suppose she did — care — a great deal.”

He could be frank about himself, but he would fain preserve some reticence about Felicity — a worthy mariner and gentleman, after all.

“She must have cared a great deal,” burst out Julia in impetuous bitterness. “Her seeking death when I came, and the manner of it, showed that.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“ I think she saw our meeting upon the strand; I think she heard what I said. She probably followed me down from the cliff, after we saw the sails of your ship.”

“ And did you — did you — care — very much?” Julia forced herself to ask as coldly and as impersonally as she could, and yet hanging upon his answer with all her soul — and raging against herself for asking the question.

“ Well — ” admitted the poor man bravely and honestly, and she could hardly fail to see and appreciate his courage and his truth; the temptation to lie was so great, and he could have done it successfully, so easily, “ — at first I did not, but naturally after a while and in a way I did. She was so sweet, so innocent, so — ”

“ Spare me that,” protested the woman quickly with uplifted hands.

“ I am only trying to show you the exact state of affairs. Of course I — cared — in a measure — in a way. The poor child gave up so much. But, you will never believe it, I can never persuade you of the truth, it is perhaps a hopeless endeavor, but as I live and move and have a being, before Almighty God, no other woman has

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

displaced or ever can displace you from my heart, Julia.”

“Not even your Felicity?”

“Not even a thousand Felicities.”

“Yet she was the mother of your child.”

“For God’s sake, don’t go into that, that’s past and—”

“Past,” cried the woman. “Do you think it can ever pass?”

“No, I suppose not, but as I live, it seems to me that all my thoughts in—in living with her—were for her happiness, not for my own.”

“Shocking,” mocked the woman.

“Yes, it is. I cannot make it plain, I do not expect you to understand; but she loved me, she was all alone, she merited so much love and received so little. When she loved me most the memory of you intervened. Often I would tear myself away from her and go alone on the other side of the island to spend the day in agonized thought of you. Naturally I was convinced that you were dead. My experience said to me that it would be a practical impossibility for that whaleboat to survive the storm. No sound had come from out the deep. No sail had whitened

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the horizon for all that long time. I was absolutely destitute of everything. I was shut off there on that island, off from the world with a woman, with a woman who loved me, to whom I was everything. I did her a great wrong."

"And me a great wrong."

"Yes, you too, and a wrong to my manhood; but I am prepared to atone."

"You can never atone."

"I am ready to be punished."

"Punishment you shall have."

"I shall submit to it, whatever it may be."

"I can never forgive you."

"I will work and wait all my life in the hope that you may."

"Is that all?"

"That's all, and it is more than enough. It only remains to add that, strange as it may seem to you, you and you alone have my heart, and you have ever had it. Even with that little child's arms around my neck, I thought of you. You can believe it or disbelieve it, you can not alter the fact."

"It can not be true."

"As I live, as God hears me, it is true."

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEREIN CAPTAIN STEPHEN CLEVELAND AWAITS
ANXIOUSLY A STORY HE FEARS TO HEAR

THE silence that followed Captain Stephen Cleveland's solemn affirmation was broken by Julia Cleveland's laugh. There was not a woman on earth who was less emotional and hysterical than she; normally she was self-contained and restrained beyond her sex, but the conversation coming at the close of such a day, as that she had passed through was too much for her; her femininity got the upper hand, and as she laughed, presently she also cried.

Captain Stephen Cleveland would fain have drawn nearer to her in order to comfort her, but marking his intention, she waved him aside and by a superhuman effort recovered some of her self-control, and gradually became silent and more composed. When she did so, resting her arms upon her elbows, she buried her face in her hands as if by closing her eyes she could

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

shut out the horrors of the present situation. Her body trembled with the varied emotions of the situation.

The hardest constraint that was ever laid upon him was laid upon Captain Stephen Cleveland then. He would have given all the remaining years of his life, he believed, if for one moment he could have taken her in his arms and comforted her, as he might have done before he had forfeited the right to be her stay and her support. He hardly dared even to break in upon her sorry isolation with a spoken word. He did not know what to say or what to do. Of course she did not believe his protestation, even though he had sworn to it. He could not blame her, although he could not make it any stronger. Life and the future would have to do that.

The skeins of existence for him and for her had become so tangled in their weaving that it would require patience and long time for the unravelling. Any rude present onslaughts by him would forever and irremediably break that web. And in some way or other the initiative had been taken out of his hands. Or had he

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

thrown it away? The consciousness that he must wait, that he could of himself do nothing, was not the least part of the punishment he must endure. To wait, to follow another's leading, to be subject to another's direction, was intensely galling and difficult for a man of his temperament and rearing.

Again it was the woman who broke the silence.

"That's all," she said, wearily lifting her head. "Captain Crowninshield will make you comfortable; there's a spare berth off his cabin. If you need anything, ask him. I can't stand any more now. Good-night."

But here he rebelled a little.

"No," said he gently and pleadingly, "it's not all."

The woman flashed into resentment at once.

"You question my decision on my own ship? You are no longer master of it or of me," she went on ruthlessly, turning the blade as she lunged for his heart with her sharp speech.

And Captain Stephen Cleveland felt the thrust; he winced but continued firm in his demand.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I want to know,” he said quietly, “how and where you got this ship you say is yours, and —”

“Again I ask, by what right do you interrogate me?”

“You are my wife still.”

“Your wife!”

And it is hardly possible to imagine the scorn, the mockery, the contempt with which she fairly threw those two words at him.

“Before God and man,” he replied firmly.

“And did you think of that on the island?”

“As God hears me, I did; and I am entitled to know your life since —”

“Entitled?” exclaimed the woman, still in arms against him.

He had made a mistake there, — he recognized it. Swiftly he sought to recover himself.

“Perhaps not entitled, — it may be that was too strong a word.”

“It was.”

“I grant it, therefore I entreat you,” he admitted, striving to placate her. “Think with what anxiety I long to know your life. I have confessed all of mine and —”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I can't match your confession with one like it.”

“Thank God for that!”

“But why, why?” cried the woman. “Is there any reason why I might not have done as you did?”

Captain Stephen Cleveland turned ghastly pale under his brown at the shock of this bold yet terribly menacing and suggestive question. He clenched his hands and leaned across the table closer to her.

“But you did not?” he cried. “For God's sake, say that you did not!”

A spasm of terror, anguish, jealousy, and wild ferocious resentment commingled, such as he had not thought the human frame could sustain, the human heart experience, shot through him. And the woman exulted in the outward evidence of his emotion at the bare thought that had come to him from her thoughtless but suggestive question. It was higher testimony and greater, of what he really thought of her, of the power she still exercised, of the sway that was still hers, than she had been able to draw from his most fervent protestations.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

This fierce, unreasoning jealousy, this soul-tearing fear that he displayed moved her strangely. Instantly she was tempted to play upon it, to stimulate it further, to arouse it to greater degree; for a moment admissions, confessions that were false, yet that it would almost kill him to hear, trembled upon her lips; to increase his madness and his sufferings she almost uttered them, but she put the temptation by at last. She looked at him unblenchingly for a moment and then said with much more quietness than her emotions warranted,

“ You insult me by such a question.”

“ But you don't answer it,” he thundered.

“ And I shall not. You have no right to measure true womanhood by your own low standard.”

“ I — ” began Captain Stephen Cleveland furiously.

“ Stop!” said the woman. “ I am willing to tell you how I came to be here, but not at the expense of my self-respect. It has been outraged enough already: I have borne quite as much as I can bear. If you say another word on this line, I shall have you expelled from my cabin.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

The punishment was beginning: a remark like that from his wife would have been hard for any husband to bear, and for a man like Captain Stephen Cleveland it was almost impossible. The years of absolute freedom on the island had only made the slightest restraint the more irksome. He could scarcely endure to be thwarted even in little things, much less in great matters.

He straightened up, clenched his hands, uplifted his arms, and then threw them down by his side in ruthless gesture. He opened his lips to speak, but immediately closed them again, clenching his teeth in a resolute determination to say nothing then.

It was not good tactics on Julia Cleveland's part thus to play with her husband; had she stopped to think she would have realized that she was losing that advantage in the struggle between them which had hitherto lain entirely with her.

She was baiting her husband and enjoying his torture in a wretched, miserable sort of a way, and the more she gave rein to her passionate indignation and her desire to hurt him at whatever

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

cost, the more he controlled himself and the less secure became her superior position.

“Will you listen now,” she asked at last, as his stubborn silence forced her to speak, “while I tell you my story?”

He nodded abruptly.

“Have you also a story to tell?” he asked harshly.

“I have.”

“And what is it?”

“Do you think you can hear it calmly?”

“I can. I did not realize that you had any special story, but I see, of course, you must have something to disclose. I am anxious to hear it.”

He had no idea, of course, what that story would be. He waited for it with certain apprehension; he had not completely disabused his mind of that sudden suspicion to which he had previously given utterance, and which had come to him the more easily because of his own fall, his own lack of loyalty. And the strangeness of the suspicion made it the more unbearable; for whatever he might have said, or done, or been, he had never thought other of her, if she lived, than that she was true, faithful, and de-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

voted to him. He did not really believe differently, now, or he could not have controlled himself even as imperfectly as he had. But the suspicion was there in spite of every effort he made to reassure himself, the woman helping him but little by her attitude mental and physical.

“And do you think such a woman as I,” she began, and as she spoke she rose to her feet, extending her arms widely before him in splendid gesture as if inviting the most critical judgment with absolute confidence of an approving verdict, “could be alone in the world, with a tie so tenuous as that contingent upon the remote possibility of your being alive, without having a story to tell, Stephen Cleveland?”

This time it was the man who sat down, while the woman remained standing, their positions of the previous hour being thus reversed. Indeed, his knees fairly gave way beneath him at the rush of emotions consequent upon his wife's words.

“I wait,” he said, with deepening gravity, “for what you have to reveal.”

“You have been frank with me; I shall be frank with you. While your lovely Spirit of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the Island wooed and won you" — she had divined that phase of their relations, evidently, for he remembered that he had not said anything to warrant that conclusion, — "there were those who sought my heart and person as well."

"I can well believe that," reluctantly admitted the man who had faced so many desperate situations in life, but never one quite like this, he thought.

With the growing agonizing suspicion that it became more difficult to keep under control, he could not tell whither this discourse was about to tend, or what appalling revelation might be made to him. Yet, having in his hand the clue, he was determined to follow it wherever it might lead. And — can you believe it, dear reader? — his own course, Felicity, his little son, the years on the island, what they had been, were swept out of his mind on the instant. In this possible new development these things, which had bulked so large, counted for nothing with him, though she had not so easily forgotten.

He confronted her with much the same feeling that a judge might experience before a criminal. His misjudgment of her was com-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

plete and absolute. The utterly unwarranted suspicion was fast becoming an assurance, the idea an obsession.

She could not know or realize that; she was only playing with him, to make him see that she had not been undervalued, throwing her own devotion into higher relief by showing that it had surmounted, if not temptation, at least opportunity. She was playing with fire of course; nay, more, she was carelessly handling explosives of the most violent character, which would most certainly rend her.

“Perhaps I would better begin at the beginning,” she said at last.

“That will be best,” he assented.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW JULIA CLEVELAND RAISED A STORM SHE
COULD NOT QUELL

IN that whaleboat, then," she began, "we drifted for many days; our scanty stores of provision were soon consumed, the fresh water was drunk to the last drop. One by one the men died, until finally the boatswain and I only were left alive. Then we were picked up by a whaler, the *Susan and Jane*, commanded by Captain Derby Crowninshield, who is now in command of this ship—my ship, by the way. Oh, what anguish and despair I suffered!" she cried, her words coming from her with torrential energy and force, as her mind conjured up again the sorrows and agonies of those awful hours, as fresh in her mind as if they had happened only yesterday. "How I longed for you, for some assurance that you were alive still! Or if you were dead, how I craved to die with you! Life without you was insupportable. I could

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

not bear it. I stared at that burning ship until my eyes could see nothing. Light went out for me. I prayed, I remember, that it might be forever; and when the day broke, they tell me, God had heard my prayer. Mercifully I knew nothing then and thereafter, for I was a mad woman. And in my madness I used to sit looking toward the south, hour after hour, murmuring your name. Even insane, I longed for you. But literally I knew nothing from the hour I lost sight of your ship until my baby was born in Honolulu, months after."

"Your baby! Was there a child?"

"Yes, yes, your son and mine, born of sorrow and bereavement, calling me to reason again and filling my heart with harder pains and more unbearable than birth throes even. Oh, my God, how I rebelled against Him when the poor little baby died after summoning me again to remembrance! To take my little son, who looked so like the husband that I loved and had lost, seemed so cruel to me. But now, now, I am glad he did not live to see the dishonor of his father."

She stopped and stared at her husband in a rush of bitter recollection and shame. He

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

wanted to throw himself at her feet for the moment, carried away by her eloquent, moving plea. And yet he winced at her last assertion, and in unconscious justification sought to recur to his suspicions of before.

“Go on,” he said; and it was strange indeed that the remembrance of poor little Felicity’s bright-eyed baby boy, whom he had known and loved, did not move him so much as the story of this child of sorrow, whom he had never seen.

“Yes, I will go on,” replied the woman, who in spite of her own pain as these ever fresh memories of that sad and bitter past overwhelmed her again, yet exulted in the suffering she was causing him, and intended that he should drink his cup to the very dregs. “Foresman and I managed to get to San Francisco. I sought for work and found none: positions that were offered to me I could not accept. The little money we had from the sale of the whaleboat to Captain Crowninshield, and from Foresman’s pay while he was on the ship, was soon spent. The old man fell ill. He had saved my life almost at the sacrifice of his own. He had given me his portion of the food and drink in

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the whaleboat. He had watched over me, cared for me like a child while I was mad. There was nothing I ought not to do for him, nothing I would not do. And I endured everything. Even then, poor, friendless, desperate, heart-broken, I was thinking of you—you—only you. I was planning, hoping, praying. I had but one dream, one ambition: to get a ship, to get money, to get men, to go to seek you. I'd have sold my soul for you then. Morning, noon, night, day after day, week after week, I prayed, worked, labored, struggled on. And you—you were happy on that island in that woman's arms! God, oh God, is there justice in this world any more, I wonder?"

"Julia!" he cried.

"Stop, don't interrupt me! I failed everywhere and at everything; even hope at last was taken from me. One night in San Francisco I went out on the street to beg assistance from any passer-by. I had pawned or sold everything we had, except this."

She lifted her hand as she spoke, and showed her wedding ring. As he looked at it she slowly drew it from her finger and dropped it negli-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

gently and indifferently on the table between them. He watched it roll a little, heard it ring a little on the polished wood until it came to rest. Then she slowly pushed it toward him.

“Don’t do that, Julia, don’t do it,” he protested.

“That night,” resumed the woman, unheeding, “I met Ellison. You remember Hampton Ellison?”

“Certainly. When the *Swiftsure* was in San Francisco I lent him money, gave him a small ‘adventure’ — ‘grub staked’ him, I think they called it.”

“I remembered that,” said the woman, “and he remembered it too. He had enjoyed some little success prospecting: there was something to your account, he offered it to me, and I took it thankfully.”

“God bless him!”

“Perhaps you will not be so quick to praise him when you hear further.”

“What further is there?”

“Much, but it can be told in few words. After a while we entered into partnership, searching the hills for gold. It was my dream

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

that you might be alive somewhere, that what did happen had happened, that I might get a ship and search the seas and every island therein until I found you. Meantime no ship ever left Honolulu or San Francisco southbound, without a word from me or from persons whom I enlisted to help me. Through the missionaries who took me in when I was ill in the first place, and through the port authorities in the other, I had every incoming ship questioned and every outgoing one cautioned to look for you and send any tidings to me; but none ever came. Oh, how often my heart broke at the ocean's silence! Never a word. Another woman would have given up, but I did not, I could not. And Ellison helped me. Words can not tell you what that man was to me." She ran swiftly on, unheeding his black and frowning looks as his suspicions flamed into life again. "He was always with me, my guide, counsellor, helper, friend. Without him I could have effected nothing. He loved me, and he served me ungrudgingly. Finally we went into the mountains to seek for gold and—"

"Were you alone in the mountains with that

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

man?" thundered her husband, voicing all his rearoused and increased suspicions in his furious question, which was not so much an interrogation as an accusation.

"The boatswain was always with us."

"That blind, doting, old fool," mocked the man, now completely beside himself.

"And is it thus you recompense old Foresman's love and devotion, without which I had not been here?" she asked.

"And I could almost wish you had died in the boat rather than have been false to me."

"And what would be the difference, if what you say were true, which it is not, between you and me?"

"God!" burst from the man, oblivious of the denial, which he scarcely heard, and his face was a strange thing to look upon. Jealousy, passion, exacting, cruel as the grave, tore at his heart; rage grappled with his soul; the sweat stood out on his brow. He leaned forward, one arm stole across the table toward her, his hand clenched. "That's different," he cried out at last.

"I can see no difference."

"What you can see does n't matter, it is what

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

I can see now that counts. That man loved you, you don't deny it, you can't deny it. How could he help it? You thought me dead — perhaps you married him?"

"No," said the woman quickly. She was appalled at the black passion and overpowering wrath she saw in her husband's face, and she hastened to speak. "No, I didn't marry him."

"True," he sneered, completely beside himself, poor blind man, "you had some compunctions of conscience, I suppose. You didn't know that I was dead. The law — you didn't violate that, being a virtuous and well-brought-up woman. This is his ship and you have been his —"

She was not the first woman, nor would she be the last, to raise a storm she could not quell. She had not intended to allow matters to go so far; she had not realized the love in which her husband held her; the truth of what he said had not come to her. Had she made too much of his association with little Felicity?

When she discovered that the suspicion which she had tacitly allowed him to entertain had become a certainty to him, when she saw his pas-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

sionate indignation, when she realized what conclusions were tearing at his heart, she repented what she had done, in even for a moment succumbing to the temptation to torture him.

His punishment was so fearful, he was suffering so because of her action, that she could scarcely fathom it, even in her enlightenment through her own heart-breaking sorrow. She began to realize dimly that his life with Felicity had been an episode after all, and that she herself was the object of his adoration. A rush of womanly tenderness, of compassion, almost inclined her to disclose her real feeling for him, but she fought it down. Her evil genius was by her side in that hour.

Captain Stephen Cleveland rose unsteadily, he stepped to her side of the table and looked down upon her, his face no less white than hers.

“Do you know what you have done?” he asked.

“Nothing, nothing, before God!” she protested.

And this time it was he who laughed.

She stared at him fascinated, making no sound. The direction of affairs had suddenly

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

been taken from her. His was now the dominant will. What was he going to do with her? was the question which throbbed in the heart of the civilized, as it had throbbed in the heart of the uncivilized, sister. It was the old query of woman to man. Whether based on right and justice or not, who can say?

That laugh, while it frightened her, brought her to herself. The matter had gone far enough, too far. In the pause that ensued she recovered herself and flamed into sudden indignation that matched his own, half forced, half natural at first, but soon altogether natural and overwhelming. What manner of man was this, that he could hear her story, that he could see her, that he could know her as she was, and think thus of her? Now he was persuaded that she was even as he had been. It was monstrous, shocking. She was furious. With quick reversal of emotions, she broke out with resentment.

She had never faced such volcanic passions as she faced then; she realized that if he had found means at hand he might have killed her, but she was strangely unafraid. He had forgotten everything but this woman he loved and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

her mordant words. His life for the past few years was utterly blotted from his memory. He saw only this one woman—his wife, great God, his wife! She had forgotten everything but his accusation, too.

“Damn you,” cried the man furiously, grasping her by the shoulder and shaking her with a force of which he was not in the least conscious, “how dare you stand there and speak to me like that?”

“And how dare you,” cried Julia in return, finding voice swiftly, “fresh from the clasp of another woman’s arms, curse me, even if I had done what you did? Take off your hand, Captain Stephen Cleveland!”

She rose and confronted him unflinchingly. The roughness of his touch had quickened her into speech and action. She resented it, and yet was glad for the excuse of it. This was her hour after all. She did not mean to let it escape her. He had transgressed, it was right he should suffer—the more the better. And yet in spite of herself she resorted to justification.

“I am innocent—”

“Innocent!” he cried, in scorn.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“But if I were guilty, what difference would there be, before God, between us?” she demanded.

But Captain Stephen Cleveland was in no mood to hear appeals to reason.

“Had I a weapon,” he cried, “I’d kill you where you stand.”

“You asked my forgiveness a moment since; would you give yours to me if I were what you thought me?” she persisted.

“No,” cried Captain Stephen Cleveland, “so help me God, never.”

And again the woman sat down, and again by superhuman effort she summoned laughter to her lips, laughter so mocking, so insulting, so exacerbating in its character that Captain Stephen Cleveland could stand it no longer. He absolutely and entirely lost the last vestiges of self-control. To his eternal shame be it said, he leaned across the table and struck her.

“You—you—,” he cried, adding an awful epithet to his words.

And then he turned and hurled himself out of the cabin and into the night.

The blow hurt her; his rough fingers left their

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

mark on her. The terrible word he flung at her hurt her too. She forgot that she had tacitly allowed the first uncontrollable suspicion to lodge in his mind, and that she had attempted to contradict it too late. Yes, it hurt. I presume even the harlot does not rejoice to be so proclaimed.

Yet there was almost a benediction to the woman in his action. If he had so much as laid the weight of his finger on her ungently before all this had happened, she would have raged against it with all her soul in arms; but now she found it proof that he loved her in spite of Felicity, in spite of the world.

She laughed again, but in a different way, and then she buried her face in her hands and sobbed and cried as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XX

WHEREIN THE WORLDLY WISDOM OF THE OLD
BOATSWAIN IS HEARD TO GREAT ADVANTAGE

JULIA CLEVELAND was no longer her natural, consistent, carefully poised, conscientious self. She was become as variable and inconstant in her decisions and conclusions as she had once been resolute and determined.

In this wild rebellion against fate, in this unrighteous but natural determination to take the ordering of affairs into her own hands, to render justice, to inflict punishment, to wreak vengeance in spite of the Divine Dispenser of these things, she was swept from her moorings, and tossed about upon a frantic ocean of circumstance like a dismantled and rudderless ship, which is helpless in the rude buffeting of adverse seas.

One thing stood out more and more clearly, however. He had thought her base; well, he should be allowed to enjoy that thought, to lux-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

uriate in it, to be tortured by it, until he was broken even as she. She would not contradict it, she would not condescend to explain. Pleas for forgiveness must come from him, and him alone, come what might. So outraged womanhood declared.

And in all this the woman and the man passionately and devotedly loved each other. Does that seem strange? Does it seem impossible that such a state of affairs could arise and continue when five minutes of plain speech and reasonable hearing could have straightened it all out? Dear reader, lives have been wrecked, causes lost, the fate of nations jeoparded for lack of just such five minutes of plain speech and reasonable hearing. And however unreal and unbelievable it may be, that is just what happened between these two. His unworthy suspicion, and her unworthy willingness to let him be hoist by his own petar, bade fair to sever them forever, and just when they had been reunited.

Julia Cleveland did not indulge herself in her joy, or grief, or resentment, or contrition, or determination, for any great length of time. A sudden thought raced athwart the course of her

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

bitter thoughts, which gave her instant alarm. Her husband had left her in a savagely desperate mood. He had been aroused to such a pitch of fierce and bitter resentment by his own imaginings, which had filled him with such anguish and despair, that she was afraid he might do himself bodily violence before she had time to prevent it.

Therefore she dried her tears, composed herself as best she could, summoned the cabin boy who waited upon her personally, and bade him ask Mr. Foresman, who since he was a passenger slept aft in one of the staterooms off the larger cabin below, to come to her immediately. In a few moments the old boatswain presented himself before her in answer to her summons.

“Foresman,” she began, “sit down; I have something to tell you.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“You guess, of course, what had happened on the island between my — between Captain Cleveland and — that woman?” she began without further preliminaries.

Julia Cleveland hated to speak of it, even to so old and valued a friend as the faithful com-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

panion of her wanderings, the sharer of her fortunes, yet she was compelled to do so.

“Yes, ma’am, most anybody could see that.”

“That my husband should be—unfaithful—to me,” said the woman, nerving herself to her task and incidentally freshening her wrath by the repetition of her wrongs, “has nearly killed me. You know how true I have been to him; you know that I have never had a thought that was not for him; you know that I could have married a dozen times over if I had wanted to; you know that Mr. Ellison would have given me anything and everything if I had said ‘yes’ to him.”

“I know,” assented the old boatswain gravely, as the woman paused.

“You know, too, how my heart’s desire, my only hope, my fondest dream, has been to get enough money to fit out this ship and to go in search of my husband, on the bare chance that he might be alive still.”

“Aye, ma’am, I know that too.”

“And you know how we cruised these waters for a year, examining every island, following every indication, running down every possible clue, until at last we found him.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

The old boatswain nodded his head. All this was, of course, very fresh in his memory. Not holding the key to her thought or action he wondered why she repeated it.

“And you know how we found him.”

“How we found him, ma’am?”

“In the arms of another woman!”

“Mrs. Cleveland,” said Foresman gently, “he was alone on that island; he’d been there well nigh onto five years, alone with that woman; an’ even in death she was a beautiful woman. No doubt he was sore tempted. Can’t ye forgive him?”

“Are you, too, his defender, Foresman?” she asked, wondering.

And so might Cæsar have spoken to Brutus.

“Not exactly, ma’am; I know he done wrong. I’ll admit it freely. I’m only tryin’ to show ye that such things almost had to happen.”

“And does man know no devotion so great that there can be no temptation?”

“I don’t know about that, ma’am. I’m only an unlearned old sailor, in spite of all the money I’ve got ’twixt ye an’ Mr. Ellison; but I would n’t be too hard on him. If I’m any judge

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of Cap'n Cleveland, he loves ye, he allus has loved ye, an' he allus will. I've know'd him a long time an' sailed with him afore ye an' him was married. He never had no time or wish to fool around with other women folks, like most young officers does, 'specially in foreign parts an' away from home."

"But this girl and her baby," persisted the wife, who was getting a wonderful degree of comfort out of the boatswain's assurances.

"In spite of her, it 's true," urged the old man, with growing earnestness. "I can't explain it, but I feels it—here," he laid his hand over his heart as he spoke.

"But I don't feel it, I can't see it that way," insisted Julia, seeking justification for her action in not dispossessing her husband's mind of its idea, and for her contemplated—nay, already determined upon—course in letting him think what he would; and yet hoping, perhaps, to be assured again of his devotion. "And I intend to punish him for it, too," she continued.

"Lord bless ye!" exclaimed the old man, simply. "I thought ye loved him."

"I do," admitted the woman, promptly.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“ Can't you see that 's why I am punishing him? If I did not care, it would not matter, but—it almost killed me when I saw him there with that woman and his baby. I thought of my own little boy dead at Honolulu. I thought of everything.”

“ The fact that ye love him this way, an' will forgive him for what he done'll punish him more'n anything else,” said the boatswain, with an insight as rare and a philosophy as true as they were both remarkable in a rude old sailor, presumably unfamiliar with the tenderer, finer things of life.

But Julia could not, as she said, see it that way. She had rushed impulsively and blindly into her present situation. He had in a measure forced the affair upon her. Well, she would pursue her course to the end, she would not be turned lightly from it now. Besides, it was too late any way.

“ A few moments ago in this very cabin,” she said, “ I allowed him to infer that what he had done I had done.”

The old man stared at her in bewilderment at this abrupt announcement. Indeed, he did not

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

quite take in the full purport of her remark at first.

“Don’t you understand?” continued the woman emphatically. “He accused me — me! — of unfaithfulness; he charged that what he had done I had done; that Mr. Ellison and I —”

“The man’s mad!”

“No, not exactly; I refused to answer his questions; the fault is partly mine. I only said his doubts insulted me.”

“Ye’d oughter denied it flat,” interrupted the old man bluntly.

“I did after a while, but it was too late; he did n’t hear, or if he did he refused to believe.”

“But, good God, ma’am,” burst from the appalled auditor, “ye know it ain’t true.”

“Of course I know it is not true. And he should know it also. That he did not almost kills me; that he could believe me — to be such as he and that other woman —”

“What did ye let him think that for? Forgive my presumption in questionin’ of ye, but —”

“I did it that he might suffer what I suffered.”

“Well, of all the — Don’t ye see, ma’am, that ye’ve throwed away yer advantage over

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

him; that afore, ye was the true one, and he wa' n't, and ye had jest that superiority over him, jest that much hold on him? Now ye both stand on a common deck."

The profound truth of these conclusions of the old man did not affect Julia Cleveland one whit.

"I don't care on what I stand, I want to make him feel what I felt. I want to make him suffer and come to my feet. He wants forgiveness; let him learn what it is to forgive, then."

"Well, ye 've gone about it in the worst possible way, if ye 'll forgive my freedom in sayin' so."

"Say anything you like."

"An' it was a black deliberate slander agin yerself an' the truth, ma'am, even though ye only let him think his own bad thought."

"Of course it was not true," admitted the woman, impatiently; "but what of that? Haven't I told you he would not listen to me? Now he has made his bed, let him lie on it."

"Ain't no good never goin' to come from no lie, ma'am," said the intrepid old man. "I ain't any too ree-ligious myself, but I've lived long enough to find that out. In effect ye've lied to him to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

hurt him; but it 'll hurt ye worst of the two on ye, an' —”

“ I can't be hurt worse than I am.”

“ Oh, yes, ye can, and my advice to ye is to —”

“ I didn't call you here to ask your advice,” interrupted Julia Cleveland, who found the old man's strictures as hard to bear as they were unexpected and unusual — and true, she would have admitted in her heart if she had allowed her better self to get the ascendancy again, “ but to tell you that I want a strict watch kept over Captain Cleveland. He might do himself some hurt.”

“ Ye need n't fear that. I know him, ma'am. Whatever he might do eventually, he 'll do nothin' now till he gits his hands on Mr. Ellison, an' him an innercent man. God help one of 'em!”

“ I had n't thought of that,” faltered Julia Cleveland, who had gone into the matter, after all, without considering what all the consequences might be.

“ Well, ye 'd better think about it now.”

“ I suppose I 'll have to tell him the truth before we land,” she admitted reluctantly in the face of this obvious possibility which her blind, passionate resentment had kept from her.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I’m afraid it’ll be too late then, — I’m afraid it’s too late now. Ye see, he won’t believe ye, — there’s only one person that can convince him of the truth now.”

“You can tell him that I am telling him the truth.”

“That won’t do no good.”

“It must, it shall,” she cried.

“It stands to reason with him that a woman like ye’ve allowed him to think ye are, who’ll do a thing like he thinks ye did, would n’t stop at a lie to git out of it. An’ if Cap’n Stephen Cleveland knows me, an’ as he’s no fool he does know me, he knows I’d lie in a minute to save ye from the least trouble. I’m a worthless old hulk, it don’t make no difference to nobody what becomes o’ me. D’ ye see what this means? He’s got to git the truth from Mr. Ellison, an’ from him alone; an’ I’m afeerd if he sees him he’ll kill him afore he gits a chance to question him. Good Lord, ma’am, ye’ve raised hell — beggin’ yer pardon — and no mistake.”

“There will be some way out of it,” said Julia Cleveland, obstinately refusing to acknowledge the awful situation.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

She was not the first woman to learn what all women, and all men too, must learn, that it is profoundly true where it is written: "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,*" — and that humanity can scarcely interfere in the Divine Plan of things without the most fearful consequences. She had disregarded this truth before; now it was rising and confronting her with an insistence she could not quiet.

"And, anyway, he deserves all he has to suffer," she insisted.

"Mebbe he does, but ye ain't the one to give him his dee-sarts."

"I'm going to do it, anyway. He asked me to forgive him when he told me his story; and then when he jumped at the conclusion that I was like him, I asked him to forgive me."

"And what did he say, ma'am?"

"He cursed me," answered the woman, her voice very low and bitter. "He called me—a name. He struck me."

"Well," said the boatswain, gravely, after looking hard at her flushed face for a little space, "he can hardly be blamed fer that; ye see, what ye let him think was so monstrous."

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“What difference was there between my story and his?”

“All the difference in the world.”

“I can’t see it.”

“It’s a fact, nevertheless.”

“How? What he really did he thinks I did. In his mind my story parallels his exactly as possible. We’re both human beings, to be judged by the same identical standard of right and wrong.”

“Nevertheless, there’s a great difference.”

“In the eyes of God?”

“Aye, I’ll grant ye that in the eyes o’ God, ma’am, men and women are probably judged without regard to sex or sarcumstances; but Cap’n Cleveland ain’t lookin’ at it with the eyes o’ God. An’ the world, if it was here, would n’t be lookin’ at ye with them eyes, but with its own eyes. I ain’t eddicated or book larned, but there’s some things a man knows better’n a woman. There’s all the difference in the world ’twixt a fallen man an’ a fallen woman: he can git up an’ go away and leave it all; she can’t. Cap’n Cleveland’s past is buried back on that island, he’s through with it, he’s

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

done with it. If ye'd 'a done this thing, yer past would be livin' still; an' if Ellison died, it would n't make no difference whatever. It'd allus be livin'. Ye could even bury a woman, like we done on the island, an' somehow or other, right or wrong, that past of her'n will live while anybody remembers her. There's things that a man loves in a woman besides the fact that she's pretty, or handsome, or beautiful, or smart, or companionable, or everything else of that kind that a woman should be; an' the two greatest things that a man cares fer in a woman is *that she is pure, an' that she's his own.*"

"And those things women love in men," interposed Julia Cleveland stoutly.

"Yes, but it ain't the same, I can't explain it. I ain't used to talkin' an' argufyin' on these yere subjects, but I've lived long an' seed much, an' I know what I say's true. The woman fallen breaks up the family; the man don't."

"But can't you see the bitter injustice of that view? We are both human beings, we both have heart and souls and bodies. In the eyes of God there is no difference, there can be no difference between us. My husband's failure hurts me as

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

my supposed failure hurts him — no more, no less.”

“That’s true enough in thee-ory,” admitted the old boatswain; “an’ mebbe his failure, as ye call it, hurts ye more than yers does him, from one p’int o’ view. Ye’re higher than him, most women are, yer heart hurts mor’n his; perhaps, ye can feel deeper’n he does, but he feels deep enough. Not only his heart but his pride, his manhood, is wounded. I wish I could express it better. His feelin’ fer the future, his love fer the human race, ye know, it’s” — the old man paused and thought hard — “it’s like a spring that’s been poisoned. If ye was a sailor man an’ was ree-duced to one cask of water an’ went to it in yer thirst an’ found that was — well, rotten, ye’d understand his feelin’s.”

“I can not see it differently,” said the woman stubbornly.

“Yes, ye can, ma’am, or ye would n’t be the woman that ye are; mebbe ye can’t see it now, ye’ve got a sore hurt, ye can’t make any excuses fer a man in the situation in which he found hisself, but ye’ll see it some day. The man loves ye, there ain’t no doubt about that; he’s

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

goin' to suffer all his life fer what he done, but he ain't going to suffer fer it now like he would if ye had n't allowed him to believe this great monstrous lie. I 'd tell him myself that it ain't true, only 't would n't do no good."

"I forbid you to say a word about it to him. Don't even dare discuss it with him, don't mention it, don't even answer any question that he may put to you, until I give you leave," she burst out furiously.

"Oh, very well, I won't, ma'am. It ain't fer the likes o' me to interfere betwixt husband an' wife. I won't come athwart yer hawse," said the old man quickly.

"And tell Captain Crowninshield, without giving him any reason, that I want Captain Stephen Cleveland carefully watched whenever he is on deck; tell him too about assigning a cabin to him below, and that for the present he will take his meals with the other officers, and I will continue to take mine alone, as I have heretofore. That's all; you can go now."

"Thank ye, ma'am."

The old man feeling that he had said all that he could, rose to his feet and turned to leave the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

cabin. At the door he paused, hesitated a moment, and then ventured further, delivering himself of a parting arrow.

“I wish to God ye had n’t allowed him to think it fer a minute,” he said, then giving her no time to reply, he went out on the deck.

Julia Cleveland sat late in the night, her elbows on the table, her face in her hands, thinking. Was there, after all, such a difference between men and women in these matters as the boatswain had said? Her common sense and knowledge of life inclined her in spite of herself to the conclusion that the old man was right, justice and fair play to the contrary notwithstanding. She decided after weary hours that with her at least it was an academic question merely; and yet, since her husband believed that she too had sinned, it had a terribly practical side. And that she had in effect lied when she did not force his suspicion out of his heart, as she knew she might have done, began to trouble a conscience that could not be always and forever benumbed by pain.

For the first time in years she could not go to sleep because of that conscience which had never been so outraged before. Had she made a mis-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

take? If so, what was to be done next? She could not tell.

Foresman found his former captain moodily pacing the deck. The first night-watch had been set long since, two bells (nine o'clock) had chimed, the mate of the watch stood on the weather side of the deck, staring ahead. Captain Crowninshield had turned in, and Captain Stephen Cleveland, as suited his mood, was alone.

"A fine night, Cap'n Cleveland, an' thank God ye're here, sir," began the old man as he approached him.

"Curse you," said Captain Stephen Cleveland, bitterly, turning on him sharply with clenched hands. "Why couldn't you have prevented it? My God, I'd rather have died on that island, than have been rescued to hear what I heard, to learn what you know, and she knows, and I know, and Ellison knows, and the world knows. My God, man, why didn't you let her die in the boat? That would have been better. Don't speak to me again," continued he roughly, "or I'll forget that you are an old man and strike you down."

He walked aft and stood moodily staring over

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the taffrail, thinking his sad and bitter thoughts, forgetful quite of little Felicity, at least for the moment.

So the guilty condemns the innocent, a common enough practice in the administration of the world's justice so-called. Once it was even carried as far as a Cross!

CHAPTER XXI

SHOWING CAPTAIN CLEVELAND ARRANGING A
FUTURE, WHICH IS NEVERTHELESS IN THE
HANDS OF GOD

WHO shall describe that long voyage homeward? There was nothing to call Julia Cleveland back to San Francisco. Her affairs there were in good hands, her agents were reliable and to be trusted; she had only to draw the dividends on her shares in the great mine, which, as it was worked by a competent and honest superintendent, developed in richness beyond any one's expectations, and she could do that practically as well from the Eastern seaboard as from the Pacific. Her ship was amply provided for a much longer cruise than she had made, and there was nothing to prevent her making the best of the way direct to Salem, a port neither he nor she had visited since they set forth in the *Swiftsure* so many years before.

Under other circumstances she would have con-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

sulted her husband before deciding such a matter, but now she felt that she owed him nothing; besides, the ship was undoubtedly hers, and she could certainly do as she pleased with her own. She gave her orders accordingly to Captain Crowninshield, and he promptly obeyed them. Captain Stephen Cleveland asked no questions and made no attempt to interfere with the navigation of the ship: a glance at the charts now and then, an observation of the compass, indicated to him where they were going.

The officers of the ship with whom he messed, occupying a spare cabin off what might be called the ward-room, were exceedingly kind to him. Julia's forethought had caused to be prepared a complete outfit for him before they left San Francisco, and he luxuriated in all the appointments of civilization. Luxuriated is more of a figure of speech than anything else, for at first he found shoes and clothing exceedingly irksome. It was some time before he could get used to them, yet he appreciated thoroughly the thoughtful care and provision of his wife.

Engrossed in his own troubles and therefore more or less indifferent to what had happened in

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the world since he dropped out of it, Captain Stephen Cleveland mingled but little with the officers. He had almost nothing to say to them, and they, respecting his moods and believing—which was natural enough—that no man could go through the adventures which had befallen him without acquiring a certain degree of taciturnity, left him pretty much to himself. He kept studiously aloof from his wife,—which was natural enough too, the officers and men thought, in view of what had happened upon the island.

Julia Cleveland did not shut herself up in the cabin; but when she appeared on the deck, her husband either went below or stepped forward, or otherwise got out of her vicinity, as he easily could in so large a ship. He had settled the affair so far as she was concerned, and there was nothing to be gained by a further discussion of it, he thought, so he ate out his heart alone in his despair. And she found to her surprise that, unless she put her pride in her pocket and made advances to him, she had absolutely lost control of events. Thinking to limit his punishment by her will, she found that the reverse was more

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

nearly true. And she discovered that in punishing him she was also punishing herself.

After the encounter with the boatswain on the night of their departure, the old man, too, avoided him. Foresman had the free range of Julia's cabin, and the sagacious and true-hearted old friend was a great comfort to her. They went over the situation together many times, the boatswain stubbornly affirming and reaffirming his position, Julia arguing with him against her better judgment and conviction, maintaining her cause persistently nevertheless.

The voyage was outwardly as uneventful as any cruise that was ever undertaken. When they rounded the Horn the sea was as placid as a summer mill-pond, there was scarcely wind enough to fill the royals. Fortunately these gentle airs were soon succeeded by splendid driving gales. They enjoyed a fine fair wind up the Atlantic and made great progress. Strangely enough they spoke no ships, although they passed within signal distance of a few, until they were within a few days from their home port.

Naturally Captain Stephen Cleveland had

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

borrowed a sextant from Captain Crowninshield, and he and the mate checked each other in their observations, and of course each knew the exact position of the ship.

Julia Cleveland had gradually developed a growing, overwhelming yearning for communication with her husband. She would have welcomed any advances he might have made to her. His silence and avoidance, the grim and lonely wretchedness of his lot, had pleaded with her more powerfully than all the boatswain's arguments. But she was too proud to take the initiative upon herself. She was, in fact, completely nonplussed as to any effective, practicable way to reëstablish the old or bring about any new relationship between them.

In the midst of her longings and wild plans, she was informed by the boatswain on the day before they expected to make a landfall, that her husband wished to see her. She could have seen him on the instant, having nothing to do, but as the invitation had come from him, the fact gave her a certain advantage, and she used it mercilessly. Since he was seeking her she could afford to wait a little longer; so she sent him

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

word that she was occupied at the time, but that she would be glad to see him at eight bells, or at the close of the afternoon watch. Then she gave herself over to the fondest imaginings, the wildest dreams, the most extravagant hopes.

She knew, of course, that an interview was necessary and inevitable. But what he would say, and what she could say, were questions that she could not solve. She could scarcely even outline any course of action. She had put herself in his hands unwillingly, unintentionally, and the determination must necessarily come from him. She chafed against this, but unavailingly. She could only pray—the deceiver's prayer!—and hope.

Promptly at eight bells she heard him knock at the door of the cabin, and with a nervous voice she bade him enter. It was a soft spring afternoon, and the room was full of light. Captain Stephen Cleveland stopped and stared hard at his wife. She was thinner, paler, less brilliant than she had been, but still to him ineffably beautiful. Upon him in his turn the anxieties and griefs and apprehensions of the long, dreary

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

voyage had set heavily indeed; yet his troubles had in a measure refined him.

He was worse off than she, for she was conscious of her innocence, and he was not; she could see a possible end to the situation, and he could not; her love for him could bridge the gap that opened between them, and his could not. She could forgive her real wrong, if he could not forgive his fancied one. She hoped, against hope and against her reason as well, that she had only to tell him that she had been indeed true to him, to have him believe her, and all would be well.

He stood very straight and erect before her. There was no cringing about the man; and secretly her heart thrilled to the recognition of his stark, stern manhood. Those long weeks of isolation had accustomed her somewhat to the thought of little Felicity, now lying still and lonely so far away. Insensibly time and distance had mellowed some of her antagonism. Her passion for her husband was always great and had grown greater; to be near him day after day, to have seen him, to have heard his voice even infrequently, had been enough to stir her

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

heart to its very depths. Because she loved him she was willing to forgive him, because she loved him she longed for him.

She had looked forward to the interview with hope, with elation. At times she almost forgot the barrier that her folly, almost as much as his weakness, had raised between them. She forgot it now, looking upon him. Instantly her eyes sought his, her glance became tender, there was appeal in her look, she made a wistful little motion of the hand toward him. She who had sworn that he should come to her feet was almost at his.

Yes, she forgot completely, but he did not forget. Men are of commoner fibre. She was of finer clay. He stood immovable; if he noticed these little inclinations of a melting mood, he gave no sign. Her very beauty stirred him into hotter resentment, more bitter scorn, fiercer rebellion. She was suddenly aware of all the conditions, and with a faint sinking of the heart at this dashing of her hopes she fell back in her chair, waiting helplessly and fearfully for him to begin. He did not seem at first inclined to speech, but she forced him to it by her silence.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“There is something that must be talked over between us,” said the man, at last.

“Yes.”

“We are nearing home,” — he bit his lip at the inadvertent word — “I mean we shall soon be off Salem harbor if we have no bad luck.”

“Yes.”

“And before the anchor is dropped some kind of life has to be arranged between us.”

“That is true.”

“I have thought it all over for a long time, for every moment of this voyage, and naturally every thought has been a deep one. We have both sinned, each against the other, grievously, terribly.” He went on steadily, not permitting her to speak as she essayed to do then, and paying no heed to her protest. “Which has done the other the more harm, I shall not attempt to say; I have my own opinion about it, but it will be of little use to discuss it with you. I don’t know what your feelings are toward me now, I only know what mine are to you.”

“I suppose,” said the woman slowly, her life almost at the touch, “that thinking what you do naturally you hate me, perhaps you despise me.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I don’t hate you,” returned Captain Stephen Cleveland shortly. “I don’t despise you, God help me, I even believe that I love you still.”

How Julia Cleveland’s soul leaped to those words! There could be no doubt of their sincerity now. She waited breathlessly for him to speak further. He was choosing his words deliberately and speaking slowly as a man under iron constraint might.

“I have explained,” he said, “so far as I could, why and how I fell. I can see no comparison between the temptation upon you and that upon me; and you were a woman and I a man, which makes all the difference in the world.”

She started as if to resent this repetition of the argument she had heard so many times, but he checked her with a little motion of the hand.

“You could not have done what you did,” — he clenched his teeth and ground out these words in spite of his effort at control; he could not retain his studied calmness, try as he would, — “if you had n’t loved Ellison — how I hate to pronounce his name, even! I have figured it all out. I want to be fair. You were sure

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

that I was dead when you made all that money, but you bought this ship and came to see if you could establish the fact of my death, so that you might go back and marry your—marry him. You always were a conscientious woman.”

Was there a sneer in that last phrase, she wondered, but he gave her no time for considering the point.

“Having found me, and being thus far disappointed in your hopes, you cannot marry Ellison or continue your—your association with him, unless I die or you get a divorce. Unfortunately for you, I have no present intention of dying, and I assure you that, so far as I am concerned at least, I will be no party to a divorce. Indeed, I will fight it to the bitter end.”

His lips shut into a thin line as he spoke. She watched him, wondering, yet glad. She could not quite see what was expected of her, and so she waited, her heart throbbing like mad.

“You will still bear my name, as you will still be my wife,” he continued a little more calmly. “My first business in life will be to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

seek Ellison and settle with him; when I have done that I shall get a ship somewhere, and you will see as little of me as possible until—”

“And you won’t forgive me, though I forgive you freely?” interrupted the woman.

“I am very thankful for your forgiveness. Doubtless I deserve the forgiveness of a good woman, or even of a bad one, as little as any man on earth, yet I am grateful for it, and am very glad to have it.”

“Yet you won’t forgive me?”

“Certainly not.”

“And why not?”

“It’s different.”

“I can’t see it.”

“That doesn’t alter the fact.”

“In the eyes of God—”

“I am looking at this as a man.”

“Stephen,” said the woman, “it isn’t true.”

She looked him squarely in the face as she spoke; her gaze was pathetic, appealing, wistfully hopeful.

“What isn’t true?” he asked unsteadily.

“What you think.”

“You admitted—”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I did not—” she stopped. “I didn’t do what you think I did,” she added earnestly.

“Impossible!” he exclaimed.

“I swear it,” she protested. “I am innocent of any wrong, either in desire, intention, or deed. I’ve always been true to you, absolutely, entirely. I never have done, I never can do—”

Stephen Cleveland laughed contemptuously. It was quite evident that he placed not the least dependence upon her statement. Strange that he had not hesitated to accept her tacit admission that she was guilty of the gravest crime, but that she could not convince him of her innocence upon oath. That laugh killed Julia Cleveland’s hope. She realized that her effort, then at least, would be quite useless; but she persisted nevertheless.

“That’s a pretty story to tell me now,” said her husband. “Doubtless you are ashamed of it. Perhaps he has cast you off, and now you are bound to make the best of a bad bargain with me.”

“Stephen, as God is my judge—”

“I am your judge now, and I don’t believe you.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“But Foresman will swear.”

“He would swear black was white if you asked him to.”

“Is there nothing that can convince you?”

“Ellison might—if I give him a chance.”

“You don’t understand. I told you—” began the woman passionately, desperately refusing to give up the vanishing hope.

“Don’t speak further to me about it,” he interrupted harshly.

“Oh, won’t you please just hear me?”

“No. Good God! woman, can’t you see that you are killing me?”

“I want to cure you, I—”

“Be silent,” he cried. “I would not believe you on your oath. Don’t try to lie out of it now. Stick to the truth. I did.”

“But, Stephen—”

“I am not going to discuss that any more, but to arrange our future—our happy future.”

“You don’t have to work if you don’t wish to,” said the wife, gently, but with quivering lips. “You know I am a very rich woman now through that mine, and of course all that I have is yours.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I would rather starve than touch a penny of yours. You got it through him.”

“I got it by my own efforts, I am fairly entitled to it, whatever may have been our relations, and —”

“And you can keep it; God forbid that I should ever touch a penny of it. I can support myself, and I can support you. I suppose that it won't be pleasant for you to live in Salem while I am away; if you prefer, you can try Boston or New York or —”

“I will live wherever and however you say, Stephen,” she said quietly.

She had not quite given up everything, but she saw that any further attempts at establishing the truth would be useless now. She would wait her opportunity and try again. That opportunity must come.

“New York, then,” said the man, shortly.

“And can you trust me there alone?”

“I think so,” returned her husband. “I don't think you ever lied to me, or ever could,” he went on, “although you did foolishly try it a moment since.”

O blind Captain Stephen Cleveland, whence

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

got you this expert knowledge of the delicate art of reading a woman's mind? And how grotesquely did you sort out truth and falsehood in the sad jumble of events on that ship!

"Thank you," said Julia Cleveland gently. "I give you my word of honor, if it is worth anything to you, that I shall live where you wish and as you wish."

"You may live as you please in New York, provided you bring no discredit upon me."

"And you may be sure that I shall never do that."

"Not again," he said bitterly.

"May I ask your plans, Stephen?" she asked in turn, wincing under the thrust.

"First of all I shall find Ellison and make him pay for what he has caused me to suffer."

"And who is to pay," cried the woman, suddenly, "for what I am suffering?"

"One did pay her share back on that island," he returned. "And I am paying too. Good God! do you think I don't suffer? I don't know where any other hell may be, but there is one here. It doesn't make any difference into what mire I sank, what I did, where I went, what

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

crimes I committed, how disloyal I might have been in deed, if not in thought, I looked for truth in you, I trusted you as I trusted God, when I believed in Him in days before these awful occurrences. I look at you now and think what you were to me, what you might be to me, — I can scarcely bear it. Do you understand?"

CHAPTER XXII

HOW THE WORLD MOVED ON, AND WHAT HAPPENED WHILE THEY WERE HOMEWARD BOUND

WHAT she might have answered is not to be known, for that moment the deep boom of a heavy gun reverberated over the water. Evidently it came from some vessel close at hand, since they had no artillery of that kind aboard. As they listened, naturally startled by such an occurrence, the men on the decks above them awoke into life and action. Sudden calls came from the officer of the watch. There were sounds of hurried feet running overhead, falls of rope were cast down upon the deck, voices broke into a rude "chantey," block and tackle creaked, the groaning of ponderous yards swayed about was heard.

Now these sounds were, above all things, those designed to arouse the interest of a sailor. But it is evidence of his serious and intense preoccupation that Captain Stephen Cleveland paid

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

absolutely no attention to them after the first start of surprise. He did not greatly care what happened on deck, or even what became of the ship, so long as he could discuss with his wife the great problems they were confronting. The woman then and ever was the supreme object of his attention.

But Julia Cleveland, although she was getting a wild fierce joy from his passionate protestations, rather welcomed the interruption. The conversation, so far as she was concerned, had already reached an *impasse*. And she felt that she could not possibly stand anything more. It was all so hopeless. The situation had become so involved that she could see no way out of it. She wanted time; even though it was not at all clear that all the time in the world would make any difference, yet she craved it, as the condemned criminal longs for a stay of execution, if only for an hour. She rose to her feet therefore.

“Something has happened,” she said.

“Nothing on earth can happen,” urged her husband, “that is more important to us than this conversation.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“I must see what is the matter.”

“Don’t go,” he protested; “we can find out presently. Let us settle our affairs now and avoid the necessity of recurring to them again.”

“You can settle them yourself,” she replied wearily, not unkindly, stepping toward the forward bulkhead of the little cabin as she spoke.

“Not without you,” he protested.

“You have already done so, and I agree to everything or anything you decide. You don’t, you can’t, believe me. Well—I—there is nothing more to be said.”

“There are still matters that require attention and—”

But she brushed by him without giving him a chance to finish, and opened the door and went out on deck, where after a moment’s hesitation he reluctantly followed her. The ship had been hove to while they lingered in the cabin, and now lay motionless, her main yards aback, save as she was gently rocked to and fro by the heavy ground swells. A short distance away to starboard and coming up fast, they saw a splendid steam frigate, flying the flag of the United States.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“What has happened?” asked Julia Cleveland of Captain Crowninshield, who had just ascended to the poop-deck, whither she followed him, her husband going forward to the starboard gangway.

“Yon ship has fired a shot across our fore-foot to bring us to, and they are putting a boat overboard. She’s an American man-o’-war, ma’am. Evidently they want to speak to us,” replied the captain.

The steamer had rounded to as Captain Crowninshield spoke; and as they watched her, one of her quarter-boats, a twelve-oared cutter full manned, was dropped overboard and was rowed rapidly alongside the ship. A young officer mounted the battens and stepped through the gangway to the deck. Captain Crowninshield descended to the quarterdeck to meet him, and Captain Stephen Cleveland also drew near.

“What is the meaning of this summons, sir?” asked Captain Crowninshield rather peremptorily, it must be admitted, as the officer stopped and saluted him.

“Sir, I am Lieutenant Wingate of the United

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

States Steam Frigate *Roanoke*, Captain Henry Van Brunt. We have orders to intercept all vessels," returned the officer briefly. Then he caught sight of Julia Cleveland. Off came his cap instantly, and he concluded his remarks in a much gentler voice and with a more polite bearing. "In times of war, you know, every vessel upon the high seas is subject to stoppage and examination, or search if necessary; your papers, please, Captain."

"In time of war?" exclaimed Captain Crowninshield, in great surprise. "What war, who is at war?"

"Where have you been and where have you come from?" asked the lieutenant in equal surprise.

"From the South Seas on a trading voyage. We cleared from San Francisco sixteen months ago."

"And you have heard nothing from the United States since then?"

"Not a thing."

"Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was elected President by the Republican party last year, and inaugurated this Spring. The Southern

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

States seceded from the Union, led by South Carolina, last December. They are in arms against the United States. The first gun was fired at Fort Sumter a few months ago. Battles have been fought, and the advantage has not been altogether with us. The Federal Government is determined to put down the rebellion by force. The sea coast is in a state of blockade. Do you mean to say that you know nothing about it?"

"Not one word," said Captain Crowninshield, greatly astonished.

"Have you not spoken any ships with the news?"

"Not one but was as ignorant as ourselves."

"I beg your pardon, sir," interposed Captain Stephen Cleveland, "but do you happen to know anything of a California mine owner named Ellison, a Southerner?"

It seemed to him an impossible and an absurd question upon the face of it. Only his eagerness made him ask it on the bare chance that he might get an answer; and strangely enough, he did. As a matter of fact, however, the Cleveland-Elison Mine was almost as famous as the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Comstock Lode, and the principal owner and manager was much in the public eye, especially as he bade fair to be one of the richest men in America. Another thing that made Ellison and the mine famous was Mrs. Cleveland's connection with it. Her story and her search for her husband had become public property and had been exploited in the papers. But that was over a year and a half ago, and was nearly forgotten by this time in the excitement of greater events.

“I don't know Colonel Ellison personally,” answered the young lieutenant, politely and in some wonder and surprise, “but he happens to have come prominently before the public eye recently. Everybody knows about him and his mine through the newspapers. When the war broke out, he sold his share in the great Cleveland-Ellison Mine in California at a considerable sacrifice and placed the proceeds at the disposal of the Confederate Government, so called. The papers were full of it before we left New York. He has been given the command of a Southern regiment, I believe.”

“Sold his share of the mine?” exclaimed Julia.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“So the papers say; but may I ask what interest—”

“I am Mrs. Cleveland, part owner of—”

“Mrs. Cleveland!” interrupted the officer, eagerly. “I remember now; you went to seek for your husband. Did you succeed? Is this—”

“I am Captain Cleveland,” answered her husband, quick to interpose and save her any embarrassment in the situation.

“Hurrah!” cried the young lieutenant smiling broadly. “That’s the finest thing I ever heard. Madam, I congratulate you on your success; and you, sir, on such a wife. By Jove, you must be a happy pair,” he added, frankly. “I wish I could stay to hear your story. But, Captain, your papers, please. I have no doubt that a moment’s inspection will enable me to give you permission to continue your voyage.”

“This way, sir,” said Captain Crowninshield, turning aft and descending the companion-way to his cabin, where the young officer followed. He looked up with the frank admiration of a sailor at Julia Cleveland standing at the break of the poop-deck above him as he passed. She turned, walked aft, the mockery of the officer’s

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

congratulations rankling, and stood staring at the beautiful *Roanoke*, but her thoughts were not on the war-ship.

After a momentary hesitation her husband mounted the ladder to the poop-deck and followed her aft.

“You can not seek him now,” she said, as he drew near. “That part of your plan will have to be given up.”

“Can I not?” was the grim reply. “I will seek him through the whole Southern army. I will ask a United States commission for myself.”

“As a sailor?”

“As a soldier. I shall meet him on equal terms, and I have no doubt that God will give him into my hands.”

Julia Cleveland was not so sure of that, but there was nothing that she could say. She had known that there must be a parting, and that it would be soon after they arrived, but now that it was so very near and so very intolerable she could not bear it. War, battle, murder, sudden death—she could not face them. Her eyes filled with tears. Regardless of who might be looking, she said softly,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“O Stephen, can't you—”

“No,” said the man.

“Won't you believe me, when I—”

“I believe nothing from you; if it be a repetition of what you tried to say below in the cabin this afternoon, you might as well spare yourself the trouble.”

“And won't you stay with me,” she faltered, “and let me show you that I do truly—care?”

“I can not believe it,” was the reply.

“Will nothing convince you?”

“Nothing that you can say or do. I will have God, he is on the other side; it gives me some excuse,—not that I needed any!”

“I can not believe it,” was the reply.

BOOK VI
FIGHTING WITHIN, WITHOUT

CHAPTER XXIII

SHOWING WHAT HAPPENED AT THE END OF THE
FOURTH YEAR OF FIGHTING

WITH what ease and complacency does the novelist dismiss with a sentence or two the events of years! How lightly does he pass by the tragic happenings of the long days and weeks and months! How calmly oblivious is he to the occurrences, grave and gay, of days of bitter conflict!

Four years have elapsed since Julia Cleveland stood on the street, with the old boatswain by her side, and watched a Massachusetts regiment of volunteers march to the railroad station *en route* to the front. In those four years had been waged the longest, the costliest, the bloodiest, and most desperately contested war in modern history — and all for an idea, too.

The regiment went forth eleven hundred strong, but in that great throng of brave and spirited men passing by amid the cheers of

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

thousands, Julia Cleveland had eyes for but one man, her husband, where he marched at the head of a company—rather awkwardly, for it must be confessed he was not cut out for a soldier, and the habit of the sea yet clung to him. He had enjoyed sufficient influence to get a commission as the captain of a company, recruited mainly among Salem people, who had welcomed him as one returned from the dead.

He had been known in days gone by as a genial, joyous, humorous, happy-hearted man. The difference in his bearing was noticed, but it was set down to the strange experiences through which he had passed. The details of these experiences were of course unknown, but enough of the general story was current to account for things otherwise unaccountable in Salem. In New York, it would not matter to any one who or what Julia Cleveland was, or where she came from, or what she did.

The same qualities of leadership, the same thorough determination to master the details of this new profession, soon manifested themselves in Captain Stephen Cleveland, and this sailor

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

turned soldier fast won the confidence of his men and the approval of his superiors.

He had little opportunity for independent action in the first years of the war; but as death depleted the higher ranks he advanced in position, until he now wore on the shoulder-strap of his faded blouse, the single star of a brigadier-general. He had made a name for himself in the army, for resourcefulness, for ability to think quickly in an emergency, to decide instantly in the crucial moment upon the right course.

All this was natural enough, if one stopped to consider it. As a sailor, many times the safety of his ship, his own salvation, and that of his men had absolutely turned upon a decision which had to be made instantly and without reflection — by instinct, as it were. Knowing thoroughly the laws that govern a ship in the sea, again and again, without a moment's hesitation, he had extricated himself and the vessel he commanded from dangerous predicaments, by doing the right thing and the only thing, at the right time and the only time.

No man ever made a good sailor who did not

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

have this peculiar quality, or habit of mind, or faculty of judgment, developed to the last limit; and many a potential soldier who could lay great plans has been ruined at the point of contact with the enemy, for lack of just such a power of instant and correct determination.

Captain Stephen Cleveland—how familiarly we linger over the old name and title now to be changed to “General”—was not a great strategist. Perhaps in a large sense he could not be called a brilliant tactician; but when in contact with the enemy, he instinctively and almost invariably chose the right course—a rare quality indeed.

He was a valuable man for a greater commander to have at hand, especially as he was one of the hardest and most desperate fighters in either army. No man would more recklessly expose himself to every danger in the imminent deadly breach than he. Grim, dark, taciturn, reserved, moody, melancholy, he seemed to awake to joy only in the heat of battle. If any desperate venture was planned, in which a command would be certain to be involved in grave difficulties, placed in critical situations, and

'AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

forced into hard fighting, he was the man chosen by that widening circle of higher authorities which grew more and more aware of his unusual qualities.

He made no personal friendships, his manner to high and low alike being absolutely cold and passionless, but somehow this grim and silent soldier was a tremendous inspiration to his men. One reason why he could do the things he did was that he could win and hold the confidence and devotion of his subordinates to an extraordinary degree. It was these qualities, which of their own merit gradually became widely known, that at the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac, after Grant summoned Sheridan to command the cavalry, caused Stephen Cleveland to be gazetted to the leadership of one of Custer's cavalry brigades.

He was very sorry to give up the colonelcy of the Massachusetts infantry regiment, whose numbers had been twice or thrice replenished during the war, and with which he had made such a name for himself, but he was glad, overwhelmingly, for the promotion and the change which brought his cherished desire a little nearer,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

a little more possible of realization; for Ellison too was in the cavalry.

Stephen Cleveland was as patriotic a man as ever lived. Five years upon an island without a flag had made him love the ensign of the United States and that for which it stood, as few men before or since have loved it. In any event he would have fought for the maintenance of the integrity of the country; probably, under other circumstances at sea; but it is idle to deny the tremendous influence upon his conduct and career to be found in his passionate desire to meet Ellison.

A dozen times fate had apparently conspired to place the coveted opportunity in his hand, only to whisk it away. He had stood with others at bay at Gettysburg and had watched the magnificent advance of Pickett's men, and he thought that he saw among the general officers breasting the slope on that day, the form of the man he hated. So certain was he that he snatched a rifle from the nearest soldier and drew a bead upon the officer's heart as he came surging through the smoke amid the fast-withering line of heroes on that fatal field. But he threw aside

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the weapon ere he had pulled the trigger. He could not be sure that the officer was he; and if it was, he did not want to kill him in that way. He wanted to have speech with him before he died. And he wanted him to know whose hand dealt death to him.

From time to time he had heard something about Ellison, who like himself had gone into the cavalry and later had become one of Stuart's trusted lieutenants. After the death of that great leader he had served under that other *beau sabreur*, Fitzhugh Lee. Stephen Cleveland, in command of the van brigade, had pressed into the very thickest of the fighting in the cavalry battle at Yellow Tavern, in the hope of getting near to his enemy; but fortune had not been kind to him on that day.

That war was fought on a gigantic field: these two, one conscious, the other unconscious of an antagonism, to put it mildly, had never yet come in touch. Fortune had been kind otherwise to both of them; that is, from the common viewpoint of kindness to the soldier, in that neither of them had been wounded. Men had fallen by their sides, bullets had ripped through their

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

clothing, horses had been killed beneath them, but not a hair of the head of either had been touched by hostile lead or steel.

The war was almost over. The hand of Grant was tightening upon the throat of Lee. It was evident to all men that the end was at hand. Stephen Cleveland was convinced of that, with other soldiers. He had almost despaired of meeting his enemy face to face in battle; he had made up his mind that when peace ensued, he would follow him and hunt him down. It did not occur to him that the moment the field grew narrowest, the greatest was his chance of encountering therein any given man.

Fortune sometimes withholds her favors through long periods, suddenly to pour them out with a lavish hand. On the first of April, 1865, about five o'clock in the afternoon of a day which was cloudy, rainy, and gloomy, a brigade of cavalry was slowly forcing its way through trees and underbrush toward an enemy supposed to be intrenched half a mile beyond. It was very still and quiet in the woods that spring afternoon, but every soul of the two thousand in that brigade was keenly upon the alert, every ear was

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

tuned to discover other sound than that of the crashing of the horses through the tangled thickets, the jingling of bits, the clank of sabres. Even the usually sharp words of command were properly subdued.

At the head and slightly to the right of this brigade rode the commander, Stephen Cleveland, followed by his slender staff. He was not a good rider from the point of view of noble horsemanship; he was still too much of a sailor to witch the world with that, and always would be, but he was a good enough rider, albeit he lacked in grace and brilliancy, for the horse he bestrode to know that a master was on his back.

As he might have done on a mid-watch in a murky sea, Stephen Cleveland was peering fiercely ahead, his every nerve strained to meet the responsibility that each step his horse took brought nearer to him. He and his eager men were ready.

The enemy, under one of the most redoubtable fighters of the Confederacy, Lieutenant-General George Edward Pickett, was strongly entrenched at a place where five country roads ran together. Lee, battling for life in Petersburg,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

had sent his best subordinate to hold Five Forks — so the place was called — to secure the retreat which he realized was highly necessary now and would soon become inevitable. He had given him the best troops in infantry and cavalry he could spare from the naked, worn, wasted, tired, hungry, but heroic Army of Northern Virginia that he so gloriously commanded. Among these detachments was Ellison's brigade of Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry division.

Against the seven or eight thousand Confederates at bay behind their intrenchments at Five Forks, General Sheridan, to whom the attack was committed by General Grant, was bringing three times their number. It would not be an easy matter to drive those desperate men out of their fortifications by direct attack. General Sheridan had enough men to enable him to put into operation other plans. He extended a part of his cavalry force to make a heavy demonstration along the whole front of Pickett's line, while another detachment was ordered to make a circuit, and if possible to get in rear of the refused left flank of the Confederate line. With the heavy masses of the Fifth Corps of the Army

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of the Potomac he determined to attack the enemy at a refused angle of his works, and if possible to break through and crush the left of General Pickett's line.

Meanwhile Stephen Cleveland's brigade was detached from Custer and ordered to demonstrate in force, pressing home an attack if necessary and possible upon the extreme right of Pickett's line, which was known to be covered by some of the Confederate horse. This would keep that end of the line busy, and thus every member of Pickett's little force would be retained in his place and prevented from reinforcing the heavily assailed left, whose position would be hopeless.

It was as brilliantly planned and as desperately fought a battle as the four years had produced. It all happened just exactly as Sheridan had arranged, and in spite of the proud heroism of the thin gray line, their stubborn defence of their works, he broke the line, overwhelmed the left, and nearly half of them were killed, wounded, or captured, while the balance was driven northward in disorganized retreat. That avenue of retreat and that force were thereafter lost to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Lee. The constricting circle was drawn a little tighter around the great captain at bay.

Firing for half an hour or more had been heavy and continuous off to the far right of Stephen Cleveland's brigade. If he was to play his allotted part, it behooved him to get into action at once. How long the conflict would last he could easily imagine. He endeavored to hurry up his leading regiment, and by his own example inspired the men to press forward.

Peering through the trees he saw what looked like a stretch of open country. After advancing for perhaps five minutes longer, the brigade entered a broad savannah; its arrival was signalized by a rifle-shot. The next minute from out the trees on the other side debouched a brigade of hard-bitten, nondescript horsemen, the officers in rusty gray, above them the tattered guidons of the dying Confederacy. The battle was about to be joined.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEREIN TWO ENEMIES AT LAST MEET FACE TO
FACE ON THE FIELD

LIFE, in those four years, had been one long agony to Julia Cleveland. She had learned a little of her husband's career in several ways, but chiefly by the mention of his name in orders and reports and accounts of victories and defeats. He had written her not one solitary word, not a line had come from him in all those years. As had been agreed between them, she had gone to New York and there she had lived the life of a recluse in her own apartment—she and the old boatswain—eating her heart out, praying, longing, scarcely hoping.

Repentant of her error, of the fact that she had really thrown her husband and his love away, she had long since forgiven him, she had long since forgiven everybody but herself. She would have been willing to die if she could have convinced him of her truth, and if he could have

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

taken her but once in his arms and kissed her again before death came.

But these things could not be; she could only live on and wait. And many other women in that and all other wars could only do that hardest of all tasks laid upon humanity—live on and wait. The Sanitary Commission afforded her finally a field for her talents and a place of disposition for her fortune, and in the end saved her reason for her.

I said she had not heard from her husband; in one particular, however, she had evidence that he was still alive, for half his army pay was regularly remitted to her every month by the War Department. He had made this allotment when he first went to the front and it had never been changed. Julia Cleveland possessed means unlimited, she could live how and where she would, but she took the intensest pride in living on exactly what he sent her and nothing more. Every dollar of her private income she expended for the good of the soldiers and for the help of the cause.

This meant privation at first. Only the most rigid economy permitted her to live at all on the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

small pay; but as her husband advanced in rank and position and his salary increased accordingly, she had plenty for the boatswain and herself. The boatswain cared little for riches; he was a very old man, he had broken sadly since he landed from his last voyage, and loved nothing so much now as his comfortable corner by the fire and his pipe, and his daily "tot of grog." He loved to talk to the young woman, to whom he was so devoted, of his Salem days and the young life of her husband on the seas, subjects about which she loved to hear.

Julia Cleveland grew to expect that monthly remittance as an angel's visit: it assured her that he was well and alive. For six months or a year neither his name nor his command might be mentioned in the despatches, yet she knew he was alive and presumably well for the time being, by these payments. She followed the reported movements of the army, and with heart-breaking, indescribable emotions, scanned and studied the list of killed and wounded after every battle, as thousands of other women did, thanking God that she never saw his name there.

After long thought she decided to write to

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

him. If ever there was a repentant woman for having allowed her husband to think ill of her for his punishment, it was Julia Cleveland. She realized how indefensible, if explainable, had been her action, how mistaken she had been in her course, how criminal had been her folly. As has been noted, she forgave her husband freely and entirely, and—though it cost her a pang to do so—by and by she forgave little Felicity back on the island. *Laus Deo!*

Oh, what an agony of self-reproach, what a passion of remorse, she went through! She would have given all her life for one word from her husband, for one assurance that in some way she had convinced him that she was true. For a moment of time in which to explain to him, so that he could see and believe the monstrous injustice she had done herself in her desire for revenge, she would have sacrificed without a regret all her future years. She went through agonies of prayer and petition for forgiveness. But forgiveness by God does not necessarily do away with the consequence of action; and although there was some comfort in the assurance which came to her soul that she had the pardon

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of the Divine Father, it was little enough after all, for she wanted the pardon of a man. And so at last she wrote him.

What would you have written under such circumstances, dear reader?

Julia Cleveland knew her husband better than you or I. She did not endeavor to exculpate herself, she did not even try to explain how the present dreadful situation had arisen, and she did not say that she forgave him. The letter was cold enough to outward seeming. How could he know that she wrote it with pen of fire which might have burned the paper over which she leaned? The letter only told him something of her daily life, it gave him news of old Foresman, it detailed a little of what she was doing for the help of the soldiers, and it assured him she was faithfully carrying out his wishes as she understood them.

No answer came; she did not expect any. If she had done what she wished she would have written daily and poured out her heart to him; indeed, she did write to him every day, but she never sent the letters. Some vague idea made her keep them, however. What she wrote and sent

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

to him, and what she wrote but kept at home, were entirely different propositions. Maybe he would read these last letters some day, she sometimes hoped.

After a while she wrote again, and presently every month she sent him a similar letter. In the second year of the war she enclosed a little packet, such as a man could carry in his pocket; it was sewed up in oilskin for protection—she was a sailor's daughter—and it was tied and sealed. The outside bore this legend:

“For Captain Stephen Cleveland: To be opened after my death, or if you are desperately wounded and are like to die, which God forbid, to be opened and read by you or to you. Your wife, Julia Cleveland.”

Stephen Cleveland was wearing that little packet in his pocket, the breast pocket of his coat, as he rode into battle in the graying gloom of that rainy afternoon. Some of her letters had gone astray, lost in following the army which moved hither and thither; but most of them he had received. He was hungry for those letters, albeit they spoke no word of love to him. They were cold, passionless, restrained; but they came from

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

her. He knew that he loved her more than ever, that every hour he was away from her his love for her grew and deepened.

Manlike, he often thought of Felicity—but with no disloyalty to Julia—as one thinks of a strange dream, or a watch in a night when it has passed. He thought of Felicity without resentment too, even with tenderness—she had given her all to him—but he loved his wife with an ever growing passion. Oh, what anguish tore his heart as he pondered upon her infidelity! How could such things have happened? He had a just man's appreciation of her present attitude. He could read between the lines of her letters that she was doing what she could to atone. He forgave what he believed to have been her falsehood in trying to deny her action, but he could not yet forgive the unpardonable sin of that, as he imagined it still.

What would be the outcome he did not know; he did not allow himself to look beyond Ellison and the meeting for which he had striven with such fixity of purpose during four long years. He was sure that he could never forgive her. No, anything but that. He could never take her into

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

his arms again without remembering, he could never press a kiss upon her lips without consciousness of what he believed, although he longed to do both. He recognized that she might have the same feeling toward him, and justly; yet he persisted that there was a difference, and whether there was or not mattered little to him, for he thought so and he could not convince himself otherwise.

A woman could forgive those things in a man; but a man could not forgive such things in a woman, at least he could not. Yet, how he loved her! And the thought of this great gulf that intervened between them made him stand as it were on the brink and stretch his hands out to the other side, where she stood in like manner. He yearned to her with all his soul. He had prayed at first that he might not be killed until he had met Ellison, but lately he had begun to wonder if it would not be better after all if some bullet should have a billet for him. Then she could be happy. Ellison could claim her, she could go to him without shame. Such were his thoughts sometimes, but they almost killed him; he wanted her, but he wanted her as he believed she could never be

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

again. Strange that the man who could not forgive his wife should bring himself to a state of willingness to die for her, so that his forgiveness might not be necessary!

He would not have been human if he had not wondered what was in that packet she sent him. It was always with him; he hung it about his neck when he slept, he carried it over his heart when he was awake, where he could feel it pressing lightly upon his breast.

As he put spurs to his horse and led his command in that wild charge upon the enemy, he found himself thinking about it in those few moments before the battle was joined. What words had she written to him that he must read after she was dead, or that he must look upon before he died if he were wounded unto death?

He galloped for a moment as one in a dream, and then awoke to a realization with sharp and sudden shock, almost as if he had been stricken, for at the head of the men before him, his sabre lifted high, the plume of his hat floating backward in the wind of the swift onrush, rode Ellison, the man whom he had sought for four years and was only now about to meet.

CHAPTER XXV

WHEREIN STEPHEN CLEVELAND ALSO FINDS OUT
VENGEANCE IS NOT HIS, BUT ANOTHER'S

HAPPILY, dear reader, this is not another of the many novels of the Civil War. I repeat, its interest is personal rather than historical; it is a story of people, not of adventure, subjectively, not objectively considered.

Nor am I dodging issues, or evading responsibilities. An I would, I could describe a battle, for among many other things that I have seen in different parts of the world and of which I have been a part—*minima pars!*—war and its adventures, in a small way at least, may be numbered. Suffice it to say that this little cavalry encounter was one of the hardest engagements of the kind, one of the most bitterly contested fights in the history of those four long years. Riding their lean and jaded horses, the leaner and more jaded men of the Confederacy hurled themselves with no

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

abatement of their old knightly daring upon their stronger, better mounted, better equipped brethren from the north of Mason and Dixon's Line.

These Northern men were just as anxious for the battle as the Southerners but they were a steadier, colder-blooded lot. It was more business than pleasure with them, while it was more pleasure than business with the others. Again, the interest of the Northern men was not now so keenly aroused in the conflict. The Southerners were fighting a battle of despair; not one of them entertained the least hope of the ultimate success of their arms; their cause was lost even then; as a would-be nation they were doomed; even a victory on that little field would not have affected the final outcome in the least degree. The Northern cavalrymen were as well aware of these conditions as the Southern horsemen. But what of that? While they could sit horse, press trigger, draw sabre, strike home, these gallant Southerners would fight, because of sheer love of combat, if for nothing else; by and by the slower Northerners would, as always, catch the contagion, and the battle would be contested, as if the fate of na-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

tions hung in the balance. Consequently the lean and hungry men made up their deficiency in strength and their disparity in numbers, by the fierceness of their onset.

Indeed, the advantage was with them at the point of contact; they were going faster, they knew the territory, they had been apprised of the advent of their foemen, they were ready. They fell on the galloping line of blue-clad horsemen like a tidal wave thundering upon an iron shore. Pistols cracked in short staccato notes all over the field; men and horses went down on both sides, instantly to be lost in the crowding mass of pounding hoofs, beneath which they were trampled hideously to earth.

Officers spurred their horses to the front and shouted high commands; flags were advanced, and in a twinkling the dull air of the cloudy afternoon was alight with flashing blades. After the old knightly fashion of steel on steel the contest was to be decided. The white weapons menaced the white breasts of men. Under the tremendous drive of the Southern charge, the Union lines gave back a little. The Rebel yell grew in volume and took on a more triumphant note, as

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

the Confederates saw the blue foemen slowly giving way.

Stephen Cleveland's first impulse was to rush straight to Ellison, who led the charge; and that he did restrain himself that day showed the quality of his manhood, the character of his soldiership, and the measure of his devotion to his duty. His private desires must wait upon his country's need. He divined instantly that his men, their deployment barely completed, would scarcely be able to withstand that furious thunderbolt of war which Ellison had fashioned and was launching upon them. He hastily gathered two or three troops on the extreme right flank into a compact mass, and waiting until the charge struck the line, as he saw it give way before the fierce, bloodthirsty hewing and hacking, he hurled this little reserve squadron full upon Ellison's exposed left flank.

The Confederate saw the approach of these soldiers, and he hastily summoned some of his rear troops to change front and meet the onset. They obeyed his orders perfectly, like the disciplined men they were, but they were not strong enough to resist the hammer-like impact of these

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

new men whom the Federal brigadier personally led into action.

The battle raged instantly upon two sides of a triangle. The pressure on the blue front was of necessity relaxed, the main body of the Blue troopers re-formed. The line strengthened, it pressed hard against the men in gray, their impetus was spent, their advance was stopped. The encounter became a stand-up-and-fight-it-out, hand-to-hand engagement, with the odds rather in favor of the slightly more numerous, much better conditioned, and now equally determined Union cavalrymen.

In one thing the Confederates had a slight compensating advantage: they were born horse-men, and they were born swordsmen. Backward and forward the squadrons wavered, the blue and gray became terribly intermingled, bolder spirits on either side pressed farther into the heart of the enemy. The clearing was filled with the noise of ringing steel, the crack of revolvers, oaths, yells, cheers, shrieks, the scream of wounded horses. Semblance of order was lost; no matter how perfectly one fought against one man, he ran the risk of a thrust or a bullet from

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

some other who might be temporarily disengaged. Those were the times that tried men's souls indeed.

The slower temper of the Northern soldiers was at last fully aroused. They fought now with as much determination and ferocity as the more impetuous Southerners. Prodigies of valor and heroism were exhibited on both sides. It was an old-time conflict waged mainly with the old-time weapon, now alas, practically relegated to the museums of antiquities in the armories of the world. In this knightly passage-at-arms officers and privates fought side by side. Distinctions of rank were obliterated, the only considerations that counted were these: Was the arm that wielded the blade that crossed yours, a stout arm and a skilful? Was the glance that challenged you a true and brave one?

Stephen Cleveland at last had leisure and opportunity for indulging his personal desires. He straightway began to cut a path toward the thick of the fight, where the plume he had noted indicated that Ellison was enjoying himself to the full limit of his knightly soul. Had Julia Cleveland looked upon her husband then, she would not

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

have known him. The light of battle had transformed him. Gone were the gloom, the melancholy, the terrible sternness. His face was aflame, he could almost have laughed as when he was a boy, — his chance had come at last. Before him was his enemy, yet the excitement in his soul did in no degree affect his action; he was coolness and method incarnate.

Followed by a little knot of desperate men who loved fighting for its own sake, and who realized that where their commander was would be found the desired opportunities, he pressed ruthlessly on. He could have enjoyed many occasions for single combat, but he declined them all so far as he could, pushing away, thrusting aside, swerving from the onsets that were hurled upon him.

The gentlemen who would fain have enjoyed a gentle soldierly debate with him were promptly accommodated by different members of his following. One rash intruder would not be denied, and because his passage was barred, Stephen Cleveland in a sudden accession of battle fury cut him from his shoulder almost to the saddle bow, with a terrific sweep of his weapon backed by all his force and power.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

The next second he found himself face to face with his enemy. Ellison was hotly engaged by a Union soldier. Captain Stephen Cleveland could easily have thrust him through with little risk to himself, but that did not suit his purpose. Spurring his excited horse, he interposed between the Confederate and the trooper, who was plainly getting the worst of it.

“Ellison!” he shouted with terrific voice, heard above all the tumult of the conflict.

The latter turned quickly to face the new foe. He raised his sword and found himself confronting a slightly crouching figure, presenting the point of a sabre at his throat.

“Cleveland!” he cried in amaze. “I thought you dead.”

“I am very much alive, you hound,” was the unexpected answer. “On guard, unless you wish me to kill you without mercy.”

A look of great astonishment came into Ellison’s face. Mechanically he made ready to parry the thrust which came with such swiftness that it needed all his strength and skill to avoid it.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he shouted, parrying another lightning-like lunge.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

By this time, however, he had recovered from his amazement, and realizing that from some unaccountable reason, the other cherished some terrible animosity against him unexplainable by the difference in uniforms, he began to fight for his life. Truly he had need of all his skill. It may be that the Southerner might have had a shade the better of an ordinary argument with swords, but hate, which was yet powerless to blind judgment, did not nerve his arm as it did the Northerner's arm.

The intense determination of the Northern officer somewhat overmatched the superior skill of the Southern captain, and when the difference in condition between the two was thrown in the balance, Ellison began to give way. The lightning like cut and thrust of his envenomed antagonist gave him no respite, and to complete his discomfiture his horse suddenly stumbled. Poor Ellison pitched forward slightly and lost his balance. At that instant he felt the point of his adversary's sabre at his throat. A thousandth part of a second, and it would be all over.

Stephen Cleveland's revenge was in his hands, he had but to extend his arm; instead of that he

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

drew it back! Why, he did not know, he could not say, he never was sure, but that he did it gave him abundant comfort then and thereafter. And there was little need, for as he withdrew his own sword, catching as he did so a glance of soldierly appreciation in the other's eyes, a Union trooper near at hand, spurring madly across the field, saw his opportunity and drove his own blade under the right arm and into the lung of the brave Confederate general. He plunged forward on his horse and — wonder of all wonders! — it was Stephen Cleveland's arm which kept him from falling.

That ended the little conflict: the men in gray saw the mishap to their leader, they had been slowly giving way before, — the end was certain. The second in command was an experienced soldier. It was better to preserve even the remnants of his precious brigade than to let it be annihilated on that field. Bugle calls rang high and shrill, the men in gray disengaged swiftly, wheeled about and broke away, realizing the meaning of the order before their slower antagonists had even heard it.

Infantry which had been hurried to the left op-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

portunately appeared under the trees at the edge of the clearing, crashing volleys of musketry rang out. Behind the infantry the Confederate horse, badly shattered and having sustained severe losses ill to be afforded, re-formed. To have attacked these reinforcements would have entailed heavy and useless loss. The main battle was being fought far to the right. The diversion which Stephen Cleveland had made had served its purpose; it had drawn infantry from the left and centre to strengthen the line; nothing further was to be gained by attempting to storm the Confederate right. These positions would be untenable in a few moments anyway.

Cool soldier that he was, Stephen Cleveland having thus brilliantly carried out his orders, led his re-formed regiments back to the shelter of the clearing and deployed them, threatening the enemy and holding him in place while he was being overwhelmed elsewhere. On his own horse, within the Union lines, was led the dying Confederate commander. They laid him on coats and blankets piled on the wet grass under the trees. The swift examination of the Union surgeon

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

convinced the little group about him that Ellison's hour was at hand.

"How is it, Doctor?" gasped the man as the surgeon started to leave.

"You are a soldier, General," answered the surgeon, gravely. "I am afraid —" he stopped.

"I understand, sir," returned Ellison, thickly, "and our cause is lost — I am glad to have died — at the head of my men — on a hard-fought field."

He closed his eyes, the effort of speech being terrific.

"Gentlemen," began Stephen Cleveland, slowly to the bystanders, "I know this officer, he was once my friend. You are sure you can do nothing for him?" he asked of the surgeon.

"Nothing, sir, he has hardly five minutes to live."

"Gentlemen, will you withdraw and leave me alone with the prisoner?" asked the Union commander.

Instantly the others bowed their acquiescence and turned away, moving out of ear-shot, and preventing others from approaching. Captain

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Stephen Cleveland knelt down by the side of the man he hated.

“Ellison,” he said in piercing whisper.

The other opened his eyes.

“It’s you, Cleveland,” he said thickly. His hand went to the breast of his coat, he fumbled with something a moment. “It’s there,” he said.

But Stephen Cleveland had other things to think about than what was in the breast pocket of his enemy’s coat.

“What about my wife?” he asked.

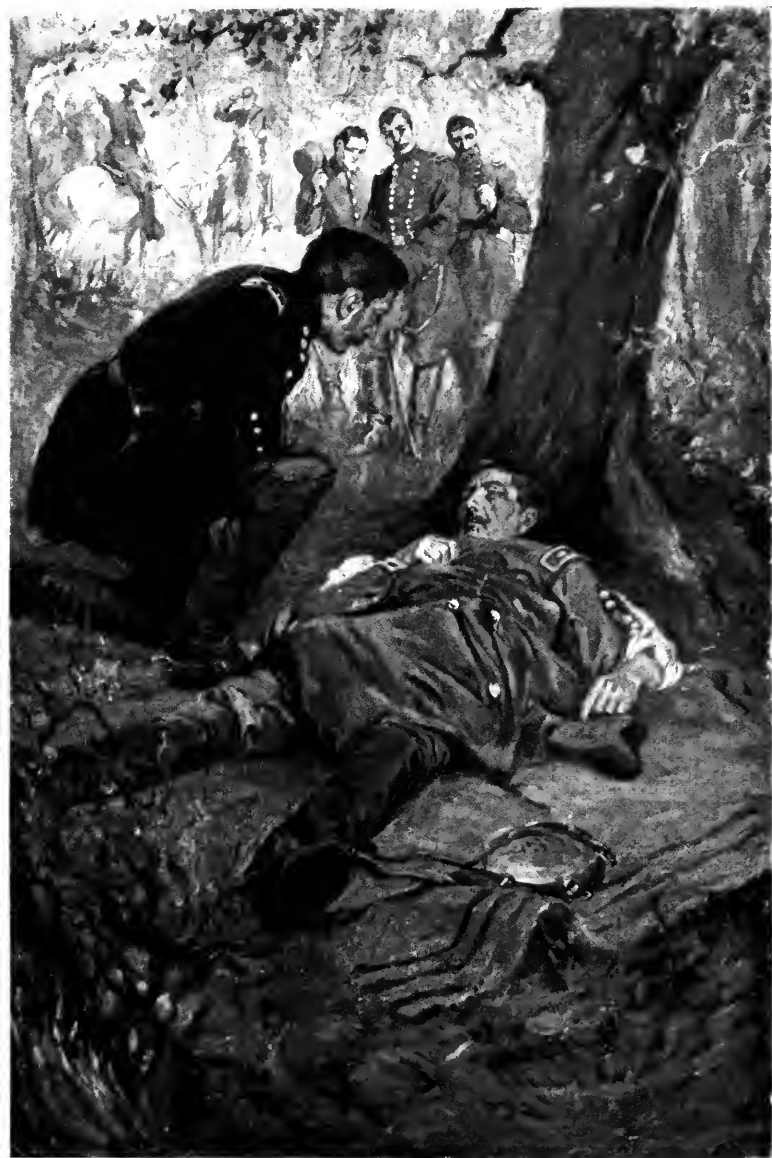
Ellison opened his eyes. For a moment they brightened at the mention of the woman of whom he too had dreamed, and whom he also had loved, and to whom he had been absolutely true during those years of absence, of hard fighting within and without.

“I loved her,” he said brokenly.

“And she,” persisted the man bending over him, clenching and unclenching his hands. “What of her?”

“She — she —” began the man weakly.

He was trying desperately to say something. Captain Stephen helped him.



Captain Stephen Cleveland knelt down by the side of the man he hated. "Ellison," he said in piercing whisper, "what about my wife?"

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“Did you and she ever live together — as man and wife?” he asked.

A little smile flickered across the pale face and paler lips of the dying man. Again his hand went to his breast. Evidently in his own thought he had not heard the question, or if he had he did not heed it.

“Julia — she —” his voice faltered. “I loved her,” came clear and strong from his lips.

“I want an answer,” cried Captain Stephen Cleveland, laying his hand not too gently upon the other’s shoulder.

He never got that answer for which he had waited so long. There came a choking cough, a rush of bloody foam from the lips which were suddenly compressed and as suddenly relaxed, and with that word of affection still echoing in the ear of the living, the dying passed beyond speech or answer to any question.

The four years’ quest of his enemy, whose death he had prayed for, whose punishment he had planned, was over. The man had fallen to his hand at last and he had spared him. The hope he had cherished that from him might be learned some assurance that it was all a hideous dream,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

that there had been some awful mistake, that it might be possible that Julia had not twice lied to him, had vanished with that bubbling rush of heart's blood between clenched teeth and stiffening lips.

The man he hated, the man he believed had supplanted him in his wife's heart, had died confessing to him, her lawful wedded husband, that he had loved her, that he still loved her. Captain Stephen Cleveland had not had any answer to his question, he had not taken vengeance for his wrong. The man had fallen by another's hand.

“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Oh, Stephen Cleveland, what occurred to you in that hour as you knelt there, your face in your hands, when you were not staring into the composed face of the man you had so hated living, but somehow could not quite hate dead? Did Julia hate little Felicity that way when she saw her dead on the island? Did you wonder about that then? Did you make any excuses for your wife in that hour? Who can tell?

Presently Stephen Cleveland rose to his feet,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

his officers noticing how very white and drawn and tired he looked.

“Send me a surgeon,” he cried brusquely, and presently one joined him where he stood by the motionless figure on the wet grass under the trees, and Stephen Cleveland pointed downward.

“Well?” he asked.

The surgeon knelt down and made a rapid examination.

“Dead, sir,” he answered.

“That will do,” was the quick reply. “I want a flag of truce.”

A pocket handkerchief was produced and tied on the point of a sabre. A rude stretcher was improvised from rifles and blankets. With his own hands Stephen Cleveland composed thereon the body of his dead enemy, or friend. As he drew the right hand away from the breast he found clasped in the fingers a little packet. It was evidently that which had agitated him, and to which Stephen Cleveland now remembered the dead man had tried to call attention.

He took it from the fingers of the other, indeed it fell when the arm was moved. His pale face glowed with sudden color when he saw that it was a

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

letter, well wrapped and sealed, that had evidently been carried for a long time. It was the address that caused Stephen Cleveland's blood to burn in his cheeks and his usually steady hands to tremble, for this is what he read upon it, in writing blurred but still sufficiently clear:

“At the request of the dead, will the finder of this please see that it gets to Mrs. Julia Cleveland, the wife of Captain Stephen Cleveland, of Salem, Massachusetts?”

and then followed Ellison's bold and flowing signature.

All his jealousy and hatred flamed into life again, as he held that packet in his hand; he clenched his fist and looked down into the still, composed face, all his anger welling in his heart again; but it was too late now.

Then he laughed at the grim irony of fate, which made him the bearer of the last message from the dead man to the woman they both loved. Stephen Cleveland's wife! Life is a tragic farce, he thought, a comedy of errors filled with horrors.

And she should have her packet. Fate, which had sported with him so long, had laid this last

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

task upon him. He would discharge it, and then he would fight no more.

The war was practically over. God had not permitted him to be killed on the field; God had mocked him, robbed him of his vengeance. Well, he would take life into his own hands and dispose of it presently, but not until he had seen her.

“The flag is ready, sir,” said one of his young aids.

“Very good, sir, detail a squad to carry the body, and do you gentlemen accompany me.”

It was all done with swift, soldier-like precision. At the head of the rude bier walked the young soldier with the white handkerchief fluttering from the point of his bared blade in the gray dusk of the evening; next came the body of Ellison; after that, alone, Stephen Cleveland followed sword in hand, and behind, a little group of staff-officers and others.

The flag was met outside the Confederate lines; the men in gray knew what was toward. In the waning light they could see that a body was being returned to them. There were hundreds of other bodies in the clearing, each one dear to some one, but they knew they were to re-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

ceive the body of their dead leader, dear to them all.

Stephen Cleveland and his officers stood with bared blades in final salute, as the little *cortège* which had met them turned away and steadily bore their dead captain back to his devoted men, to be buried by them there on the battlefield where, in truth, a soldier should most gladly lie. Stephen Cleveland, honoring the body of his dead enemy, with the memory of the soldier's last words burned upon his heart, beating beneath the packet that carried his last message to Stephen Cleveland's wife, somehow seems to me to be a very splendid, noble figure; and I love to think of him and that last salute amid the wrecks of battle, in the end of war, on that rainy Virginia night, in that springtime long ago.

BOOK VII
FORGIVENESS DIVINE

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW JULIA CLEVELAND PLANNED FOR HAPPINESS,
AND THE GREAT ALLY SHE MADE

WELL, the war at last is over. Like the nation then, I am sure the reader, especially the gentler one, now is very glad. There may be rougher spirits here and there, as were in both armies, who are sorry, and there may be a few who have other reasons not to welcome the piping times of peace.

Stephen Cleveland, now Brevet Major General, if you please, for gallant and meritorious service throughout the campaign, culminating in the dashing brilliancy of his telling little operations at Five Forks, was in two minds about the war. He did not love killing for its own sake, he was still too much of a sailor to be attracted by the soldiering trade, and he was at heart a peaceful man; but the close of the war forced him to a decision, brought him inevitably to some course

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

of action. What that course would be he could not even yet decide.

While the country had need of him, and while his thirst for vengeance was still insatiate, he had reasonable excuse for his whole-souled devotion to his new profession; but now that his country had no need of him, and that his past desire for vengeance found its course irreparably blocked, claims which had been less insistent inevitably assumed the place of first importance.

What was his future to be? Amid hundreds of other meritorious and deserving officers, he had been offered a commission — in his case with the rank of captain — in the regular army. To accept the commission would have assured his future. He had no mind to it; indeed, when he should discard his uniform and be mustered out he intended to seek service again upon the sea, to which he had been born and bred.

His own personal future, therefore, did not give him a great deal of concern. It was his future relationship to his wife that had to be settled. He had given over at last all idea of self destruction. He had defeated more than the enemy in those four years of battle; he had achieved a

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

conquest over himself. The victory was partial and not complete, but it was a step in the right direction, for he took a kindlier view of Ellison. After all, it was natural for his friend to have loved Julia Cleveland. How could he have helped it? How could anybody help it? Although he thought she had been unfaithful to him, Stephen Cleveland loved her still.

If he could be sure that she loved him at last, after all that had happened, he might condone the past and take her back. Yes, he had come to that conclusion. He had fashioned many excuses for his own conduct with Felicity on the island; he now began to find a few for Julia. He thought he knew his wife, and perhaps he did, as well as any given man knows any given woman; he thought that she must have loved Ellison very deeply, else she could not have given herself to him.

For a woman to give, and for a man to give, even under exactly similar conditions, involves a vast difference. Moral standards and physical conditions are so variable in the cases of man and woman. There was a difference; yes, undoubtedly, *but after all, what difference?*

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

He did full justice to the fine character of his wife, in spite of what she had told him. He depended upon her absolutely. He trusted her, he had no doubts about her conduct there in New York. Strangely inconsistent? Yes, but so it was. So soon as she found him alive, he knew inevitably that any wrong relationship with any other man would stop, as it had stopped. He also expected that conscience, duty, what you will, would make her the more anxious to do whatever he wished and whatever was right. It was that which had caused her to write those letters to him during the war, he thought; it was that which had caused her to live so quietly, which had brought her to such instant compliance with his suggestions as to the ordering of her life.

If he could have been sure that it was not duty, but love, just a little love for him, which was the mainspring of her actions, he could have taken her to his heart with some comfort and satisfaction. If there had been only some touch of human passion in those letters, every one of which he had so carefully treasured, which he had read until he had almost worn them to rags, he could have forgiven her the more easily and taken her back the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

more readily. Though there would always be a ghastly spectre of broken faith to rise between them, they could have some kind of happiness together, surely. Sometimes he thought that any kind of happiness with her would be better than the hell of doubt, of indecision, of unsatisfied longing, of unrequited affection, in which he lived.

If he could only know that she loved him, if she had grown to care for him again, if she could forgive him his own lapse, he would forgive hers. He thought sometimes that he could forgive anything but the lie she had told; that is, the lie he fancied she had told him, when she attempted to deny what she had before admitted, for as an admission her folly presented itself to him.

How grimly ironic is fate! He could not forgive the lie, although he was willing to forgive the truth. What tangled webs are woven about us! How we play at cross purposes!

Stephen Cleveland sat for the last time in his tent in the camp near Washington, with two packets in his hands, two small packets. One, blood-stained, addressed to his wife; another, worn and frayed, addressed to himself, and to be

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

opened only under certain conditions which had not arisen.

What message had Julia Cleveland for him, and what message had Ellison for her? What did those packets contain? — what protestations of one dying? — what confessions of one living?

Honor is a little word, but sometimes the things it expresses are not in proportion to the shortness of the term. It was so in Stephen Cleveland's case. He could not open those two packets, to save his soul. He could not suppress Ellison's packet either; he must place it in his wife's hands. Even if it reawakened in her heart all the passion he believed she once had experienced for Ellison, it would make no difference, he must give it to her. They had to meet, those two; they must talk of the past, they must plan the future, and everything bearing upon the past must be available for the settlement.

Stephen Cleveland recognized that so far as she could, his wife had made certain atonement. He asked himself how far he was justified in committing her to a continuance of the lonely life she had led during the past four years. It had

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

been hard enough on him, he realized that it must have been harder on her; he at least had enjoyed the alleviation of action, which had been denied her. He knew little about her work in the Sanitary Commission, by the way.

He thought bitterly how much better it would have been if he could have died instead of Ellison, or even if he could have died with Ellison. Julia was young still, and more beautiful than ever. Save for his grief and his cares, he was still a young man himself. With one or both of them out of the way, life would have held much happiness for her eventually.

Do these reflections seem disconnected and incoherent to the reader? They are order itself compared to the turmoil in Stephen Cleveland's heart and soul, as he sat in his camp in Washington that late afternoon after the grand review, expecting to be mustered out on the next day. Thereafter he intended to take the first train to New York, to see his wife immediately on arrival, and have it over.

While he mused, one of his staff-officers opened the flap of the tent, saluted, and handed him a paper. He opened it listlessly enough and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

glanced over it. It was signed by General Meade, Commander of the Army of the Potomac, and informed him in the brief phraseology of a military order that General Grant desired to see him in Parlor E of the Willard Hotel at seven o'clock that same evening.

Stephen Cleveland had, of course, often seen the Union Commander-in-Chief, but he had never met him. He wondered what might be back of such a summons, as he at once prepared to obey it, the hour being already late.

Amid the throng which watched the Union Army tramp down Pennsylvania Avenue that spring morning, preparatory to its dissolution into peaceful, industrious, labor-hunting units on the morrow, had been Julia Cleveland. As before, when she watched the regiment march away, she had eyes but for one man in the whole army. When the cavalry came along, she marked him, lean, spare, strong, eagle-eyed, bronzed, a rather terrific incarnation of war, riding in front of tattered guidons at the head of his brigade of hard-bitten, desperate fighters. There were in that Army of the Potomac horsemen more dashing, brilliant, jaunty, men of daring gallantry,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

whose bearing gave evidence of their quality; but there was something in her husband that reminded the thoughtful of Grant himself, if Grant had been six feet tall, broad-shouldered, and strong-limbed in proportion.

When he came into the field of her vision her knees shook, and she turned so white that she could scarcely support herself. Indeed she would have fallen had it not been for the timely assistance of friendly bystanders. She had all she could do not to scream out his name. The repression of four years burst through the barriers, and but for the fact that the swift march soon took him out of her sight, she must have called to him or died.

Julia was alone, too. Old Foresman was not with her; he could never be with anybody on earth again. He had slipped his cable and gone out on his last cruise ten days before, and she had come, as it were, from his grave-side to see her husband. She did not know what he intended to do. She had heard, of course, in the papers, of the death of General Ellison at the head of his command during an engagement with her husband's brigade. She read between the lines all sorts of ter-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

rible happenings. Had those two met? Had there been time for speech between them, for interchange of thought, for question or answer? She had to know. She had perforce accepted the situation while the war lasted, but now she could wait no longer.

She could not fathom her husband's probable course; he had said nothing to her, written nothing to her, communicated with her in no way since that parting four years before. He might intend to continue this policy of silence and withdrawal absolutely. That she could not stand; she must see him, she must speak to him, or she would die. It might be that she would die afterwards, she did not care. Hence she had come to Washington, she had been a spectator of his triumphant passing.

Oh, Stephen Cleveland, was there no presence in the crowds on that spring morning to cause you to cease staring straight ahead, to make you glance aside? Could you not have picked out from among the thousands that white-faced, repentant, forgiving, loving woman on the sidewalk, whose pallor and the simplicity of whose dress but served to accentuate her beauty—a

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

beauty that was yours, a beauty of soul and body and mind that was yours, for the taking.

How much sometimes does the soldier miss who rides straight on! How much happiness on occasion we get or we give, by a glance to the right or to the left as we press toward the mark of whatever high calling we may pursue! Look aside, O conqueror, as you pass on your imperial and imperious way, and give a thought to common humanity, living and dead, bordering your road.

How she passed the day, the long hours while the tramp, tramp, tramp of thousands of marching feet on the pavement beat upon her heart, she scarcely knew. She had come there with his money, and with not too great a store of it, yet without a thought she paid extravagantly for carriage hire, and as soon as a vehicle could make its way through the streets, she had herself driven to the War Department. She speedily ascertained, happily for her, that the Commander-in-Chief was in the office of the Secretary of War.

General Grant was not an unapproachable man, — far from it, — but there were so many demands on his time that of late it had become

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

somewhat difficult to get access to him. But all doors are unlocked by gallant men for beauty in distress. Her simple statement that she was a soldier's wife in great trouble, who begged for five minutes with the Chief Captain of all the soldiers, sufficed, and presently she was ushered into a great room, which a little man with a grayish beard and a beetling brow and direct glance and firm lips completely filled.

"General Grant," she began.

The General had understood that she wished to see him alone, and had dismissed all attendants; even the great War Secretary had withdrawn to another room, leaving them undisturbed.

The little General laid aside his cigar and rose to his feet as she entered. He bowed gravely in answer to her salutation.

"My name is Cleveland," she continued. "I am the wife of one of your soldiers, Captain Stephen Cleveland."

"Captain?" inquired Grant thoughtfully.

"Forgive me, he is a general, but I knew him and loved him under the old title. He was a sailor before he went to the wars, — we cruised together on his ship when we were married."

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“You mean,” asked Grant inquiringly, “Brevet Major General Cleveland of Custer’s division?”

“Yes, sir.”

“A good soldier,” returned the great captain. “What can I do for you?”

“I want to see him, I want to speak to him.”

“You are his wife, madam?”

“Yes, sir, but I have not seen him, I have not heard from him, in four years.”

“Why has he neglected you?”

“The fault is mine, he believed me to have been an — unfaithful wife.”

“And with reason?” asked the little man with simple directness characteristic of him, and yet with a gleam of kindness and sympathy which robbed the question of insult or exacerbation.

“Before God, no,” protested the woman, quite understanding her great interlocutor. “I have been as true to him since I married him, and before, as woman could be.”

“What warrants his belief?”

“I have been foolish, sir; the fault is mine, but I am not guilty.”

The General looked at her with those direct,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

piercing eyes of his that seemed to have the power of seeing into the very heart of things.

“Madam,” he said at last, satisfied with his inspection, “I believe you.”

“I have lived in absolute retirement in New York while my husband has been to the front, and save for the Sanitary Commission, I have —”

“Are you the Mrs. Cleveland who owns that mine in California—I forget its name—and who has done so much for the Sanitary Commission?” asked the little General, startled into tremendous loquacity for him.

“I have done what I could.”

“The nation is indebted to you, madam. What do you wish of me?”

“I want you to order my husband to see me.”

A ghost of a smile flickered over the grim and inscrutable face of the great commander.

“I scarcely think that military authority extends as far as that.”

Julia’s face fell.

“But I have often been able to effect by strategy what I could not bring about by the application of direct force,” he continued.

“Where are you stopping?”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“At the Willard Hotel.”

“And I am there as well. What is your room number?”

“Parlor E.”

“My own apartments are on the same floor. I will order your husband to report to me in Parlor E at —” the General looked at his watch — “it is half after five now, — I will say at seven o'clock this evening. You will receive him in my place.”

“Thank you, and God bless you, General Grant,” cried Julia Cleveland.

She stepped nearer to him and seized his hand. The little General was very much embarrassed; he could deal better with masses of men than with an individual woman.

“I hope for your happiness and the happiness of so good a soldier,” he said, turning away, as if to indicate that the interview was over.

Grant's was a mind that forgot no details; therefore when Stephen Cleveland in full dress uniform as became an official visit, presented himself at the desk of the Willard Hotel, he was met by one of Grant's staff-officers who had been specifically detailed to intercept him, and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

by him he was conducted up the stairs to the door of Parlor E. The staff-officer, who had received his instructions, tapped lightly on the door, threw it open without waiting for a response, ushered Stephen Cleveland into the room, withdrew himself, and closed the door swiftly behind him.

Stephen Cleveland had no manner of suspicion as to what was about to occur; he happened to know the staff-officer by sight and had followed him without question. He was a little surprised to find the room, which was furnished as a parlor, empty of occupants. He stood for a moment wondering a little, supposing the General to be in an adjoining room the door of which was very slightly ajar, and imagined that he would present himself in due course.

He crossed the room to the window and stood looking down upon the brightly lighted street crowded with soldiers and civilians. After a moment he heard the door to the left creak slightly, and he quickly turned about to face — his wife.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEREIN THE READER FINDS AT LAST THAT
ALL IS WELL

JULIA CLEVELAND had so much at stake that she could not afford to neglect or overlook any point in the game, however insignificant it might seem. She knew her beauty, and she realized its power. Whatever she could do to enhance it she had done. In view of the gravity of the issue to be determined, some of her critics—and I doubt not her story, as I have set it down, has developed many—might have found fault with her for her present attire. She had laid aside the sober garments which it had been her custom to wear since they two had parted, and was dressed that night in a most beautiful and becoming gown of the prevailing fashion of the day, made and fitted to her with the most exquisite skill and dainty taste that the best modiste in New York could produce. The dress

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

was a ball dress. I confess myself unable to describe it. Her exquisite shoulders rose above masses of filmy white, and I know that a little wreath of pink rosebuds was woven in her sunny hair. The excitement, the hope, had brought rich color into her cheeks.

What a picture she must have presented, as she stood there in the doorway with the darkness of an unlighted room behind her making a background, with the full lustre, the brilliant radiance, of many lamps somehow concentrated upon her, — light seeking light! I should like to have seen her then.

How good to look at, she was to that war-worn, tempest-tossed, soul-scarred soldier! At first he might have thought her a vision, but that her red lips parted, and she breathed his name, and her hands went out toward him.

“Stephen, Stephen Cleveland!” she said, — the old cry, the familiar appeal.

He found voice at last.

“Julia!” he said, hoarsely, brokenly. “But I thought — General Grant —”

“He summoned you to me. I saw you this morning. I could n’t stand it any longer; I went

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

to him to beg him to order you to speak to me, but he said this was the better plan, and —”

“But why did you want me to speak to you?” asked Stephen Cleveland, still brokenly, staring at her, his pulses throbbing, his heart beating, his brain reeling.

“Because I love you,” she answered, with magnificent boldness and courage, throwing out her arms as she spoke, “because I can’t bear to be without you any longer, because I want your forgiveness for the lie I told you — for everything. Oh, can’t you see, don’t you know, that I have never cared for anything, for anybody, but for you?”

“That makes it worse,” said the man huskily, misunderstanding still.

“There isn’t any ‘worse’ about it.”

“I don’t see how that can be.”

“Listen to me. Now God help me, I can’t help myself,” she prayed. “I want you to forgive —”

“I’ll forgive you anything, everything, if you will just tell me the truth.”

“As if you were my God Himself, I will,” cried the woman.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“Is it true?”

“Is what true?”

“What you said just now, that you—love me?”

She came closer to him, she put her hands upon his shoulder, she looked into his face, her eyes swam with tears and shone with passion, her lips were slightly parted, the color came and went in her cheeks.

“Look at me,” she whispered. “Can a doubt that I love you linger in your soul now?”

Captain Stephen Cleveland stood there trembling before that woman as he had trembled before no man, no line of rifles, no gaping cannon, no burnished blades, in four years of awful fighting. He drank in all that the woman's soul gave to him in that moment. Whatever she might have been, he knew now and at last what she thought then. He clenched his hands, he held them down as it were with iron bands. Had he given way he would have swept her to his breast and kissed the life almost out of her trembling lips, only to have felt that white heaving breast surge once more against his own.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“And can you forgive me?” he asked in a low whisper—“my past?”

“Name it not,” said the woman. “Whatever you have done, whatever you have been, I want you and only you, for I love you.”

“I can do no less,” said the man, and only God knew what strain he was under, how hard it was. “Whatever has been is as if it were not,” he continued. “I have been punished.”

“And I too,” said the woman.

“But now I forgive as I am forgiven, and I love as I am loved. Oh, Julia, my wife, my sweet wife, Julia.”

In the tight clasp of his arms, in the close pressure of his lips as he held her and as he kissed her, he strove to make up for that long decade of denial, and with a strength and passion that matched his own she clung to him, giving back all that he gave, and asking ever more, more. She yielded herself up to him completely. She was his, his wife in the sight of God and man; she returned in full measure all that he vouchsafed; neither in law nor love could she deny him anything. In these delirious moments of restoration they clung together with kisses as long

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

as their separation, as sweet as life or light itself.

By and by he sat down in a great chair and drew her almost roughly to his knee, making sad havoc of her dainty finery—to which she gave no thought at all—while he held her close with one hand and with the other drew from his coat two packets and laid them on a table at hand.

“After this hour,” he began, “we shall not refer to the past; indeed, I would not mention it now, but—”

“Stephen,” interrupted the woman quickly, “there is something about that past I must tell you, that I have lived to tell you.”

“But I don’t want to hear it,” returned her husband. “Whatever it was, I have forgiven, as I want forgiveness. I want to forget, as I want you to forget.”

She strove to kiss away the cloud upon his face as he said these brave but also impossible words.

“And that you have taken this course,” she said earnestly, “proves your manhood. It makes me prouder of you than ever, and it makes my own forgiveness seem a trifle. But, Stephen,

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

you must believe me now." She took his hand and laid it upon her heart. "Feel it beat for you, truly as it has ever beaten. I am not going to hurt you," she went on quickly, "I am going to bless you, I think, and I must speak."

"Don't," he pleaded.

"You will thank me for it."

"I only want you now, and the future—"

"Stephen Cleveland," said the woman with desperate determination, "if you do not let me speak, and be silent that you may hear, although I go to my death I leave you this moment."

She made a move as if to rise and drew herself away.

"Anything rather than that! I will listen," said the man, drawing her close again. "Speak on."

"I did lie to you once," said Julia.

She slipped her arm around his neck and laid her head upon his shoulder. She spoke in low whispers, her warm breath playing across his brown and burning cheek.

"I know," said the man, "and I have forgiven you."

"But what you thought was a lie," said the

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

woman, "was the truth, and what you thought was the truth was a lie."

"I don't understand," he cried in amazement almost too great for expression.

"Hampton Ellison—" she could feel her husband wince as she spoke the name—"did love me, as I told you; but I never gave him a thought. He did ask me to be his wife, — I scarcely even considered his proposal. He was nothing to me, nothing."

"But you said—"

"I did not say, but I allowed you to do so. That was the lie; I wanted to punish you, I let you think what you pleased."

"Julia, do you mean to tell me that it is not true; that you did not give yourself to Ellison; that you—"

"I mean just that," answered the woman. "I am as much yours, body and soul, as I ever was. I never have been any one's but yours, I never could be."

Stephen Cleveland lifted her from his knee, he rose from his chair, he swung her about until she faced the light, he looked at her, he looked into her face, he looked into her eyes, he looked

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

into her soul; what he saw there gave him exquisite pleasure and satisfaction, for she bore his gaze unflinchingly. He had been blind before, but now his eyes were opened. He saw and believed at last.

“Oh Julia, Julia, thank God, thank God,” he cried.

Catching her again in his arms he lifted her as if she had been a child, and held her up a moment and then let her down gently to the level of his heart. Her arms were about him once again.

“And do you believe me at last?” she asked, after a while when speech was possible to them again.

“Yes,” said the man. “I was a fool; I ought to have believed you against your own words, against everything. I ought to have known that truth and honor and absolute devotion were in your heart, but I measured you by myself and found you wanting.”

“No more of that,” said the woman, tenderly laying her hand on his lips. “Now tell me about Ellison. He died in an encounter with your command, I read.”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“But not by my hand,” protested Stephen Cleveland, earnestly.

“Thank God for that,” she said soberly, “for he was my friend in trouble.”

“And he loved you, Julia,— how could he help it?” he said, generously.

“I know, poor fellow,” said the woman softly.

“And he died saying so. We met in the heart of the conflict. I disarmed him, his horse stumbled, my blade was at his throat; but something stayed my hand, I could not kill him. In spite of me another delivered the fatal blow. I took him back to our lines and asked him about you. He said he loved you, and then he died. We sent his body back into his own line under a flag. Somehow, I could not hate him then. From the pocket of his coat I took this packet; as you see, it is addressed to you—” he lifted the little packet from the table where he had laid it a few moments since—“and I deliver it into your hands.”

“Will you read it?” asked woman, tearing it open and tendering it to him.

“It is not meant for me, but for you,” said Stephen Cleveland, gravely refusing it.

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“And that other packet?”

“It is the one you sent me in a letter. Oh, those cold letters! If there had been one word of love — ”

“I did n't dare,” returned the wife, kissing him again.

She stepped to the table, reached for her own packet, tore it open, and handed it to him.

“Will you read this one now?”

“What says it?” asked the man.

“It tells you just what I have told you. I couldn't bear to have you die not believing in me. I thought you would read it then, and it might give you a moment's happiness to know that I had been true.”

Stephen Cleveland took the packet, kissed it, and laid it in the grate, where a low fire was burning.

“No written words can supplement what you have said. I need nothing more.”

“And here,” she continued, handing him another envelope which she took from the mantel, where she had placed it before he came, “is a letter from old Foresman.”

“Where is he? — how is he?”

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“He died last week, peaceful and happy, save for our estrangement; and before he died he scrawled this.”

“Have you read it?”

“Yes,” said the woman.

“And what is it?”

“Read it yourself.”

“No, tell me.”

“It is an assurance that of his own knowledge he knows that I was guilty of an untruth when I allowed you to cherish your belief. He begs you to hear me and believe me and love me now.”

“Brave, true-hearted old sailor,” said Stephen Cleveland tremulously. “Yet this letter goes to the fire with the others. I will take nothing but your word, my wife.”

“And shall I?” asked Julia tremulously, extending her letter from Hampton Ellison toward the blaze.

“No,” said Stephen Cleveland quickly, “that you must read.”

“Now?”

“Immediately.”

“But I don’t want to take one thought away

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

from you for a moment now," pleaded the woman, smiling adorably into his face.

"I can spare a few moments to the dead, and I shall hold you close while you read. I'm never going to let go of you again."

It was a short letter and soon read, just an assurance that his dying words had confirmed, that he had loved her, that he always would love her, that he had lived to love her, and that he would die loving her; and as he had no kith or kin he told of a will in which he gave her whatever was left of his share of the Cleveland-Ellison Mine. The boatswain, by the way, had left his share to his old commander. Ellison's letter contained a natural expression of his disappointment and regret that she still cherished her husband and refused his proffered hand. When she had finished she looked up at him and placed the letter in his hand.

"This," she said, "you too must read."

He shook his head.

"I read nothing."

"Read this letter for my sake, for my peace of mind. Won't you read just this much?"

She pointed to the one paragraph, that ex-

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

culpated her. She laid her hand upon his head, that stubborn, unbending head of his, and forced it gently down until his eyes took in the purport of the few brief lines.

“I didn’t need it,” he protested.

“I know you did not,” was the answer, “but I wanted you to see it before I put it away forever.”

She laid the letter with the others on the live coals, and together they watched it burn away, and then—

O soldier of the Southland, sleeping under the trees on that blood-bought field where thou laidst down thy life for that which thou deemedst best, couldst thou know that thy last words were committed to the fire by the woman thou lovedst, closely clasped in another’s arms?

O little Felicity, where thou too sleepest on the heaven-kissing hill of the far-off island, couldst thou believe that this man and this woman who stood breast to breast, lips to lips, remembered thee no longer?

There was a knock at the door, the two lovers separated, Stephen Cleveland opened it, and

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

there stood the staff-officer who had brought him up the stairs.

“General Grant’s compliments to your wife, sir, and could you receive him?”

The little General must have been very confident of the issue of this strategy, and of the tactics of Julia Cleveland, for he was close behind his messenger. He heard Stephen Cleveland’s reply, and signing the staff-officer to wait, he entered the room and closed the door. He looked keenly from one to the other, from the fair face, so nobly exultant, of the woman, to the sterner countenance of the soldier, from which all grimness had somehow been forever dispelled.

“All is well?” he asked briefly.

The woman stepped to the man’s side, the man’s arm went around her waist, her hand slipped across his shoulders.

“Yes, General,” she said smiling, “all is well.”

The little General brought his heels together suddenly, he lifted his right hand in salute, in another moment he turned sharply, and without another word left the room, wherein at last all was well.

FINIS

Please Return



VBC
LOIG79
CIEU



University of California, Los Angeles



L 005 926 379 8

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 001 372 318 4

